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EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

COMMANDOS 2

First review of the smash strategy sequel

WORLD EXCLUSIVES

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

We get to grips with playable code for two of the year's finest shooters

REVIEWED

MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC
ANARCHY ONLINE
THRONE OF DARKNESS
FROM DUSK TILL DAWN
FA PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGER 2002

FIRST REVIEWS!

RED FACTION

Half-Life meets the miners' strike

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02

The beautiful game is coming home

TINY COMPO:
What is meant by the term 'going commando'?

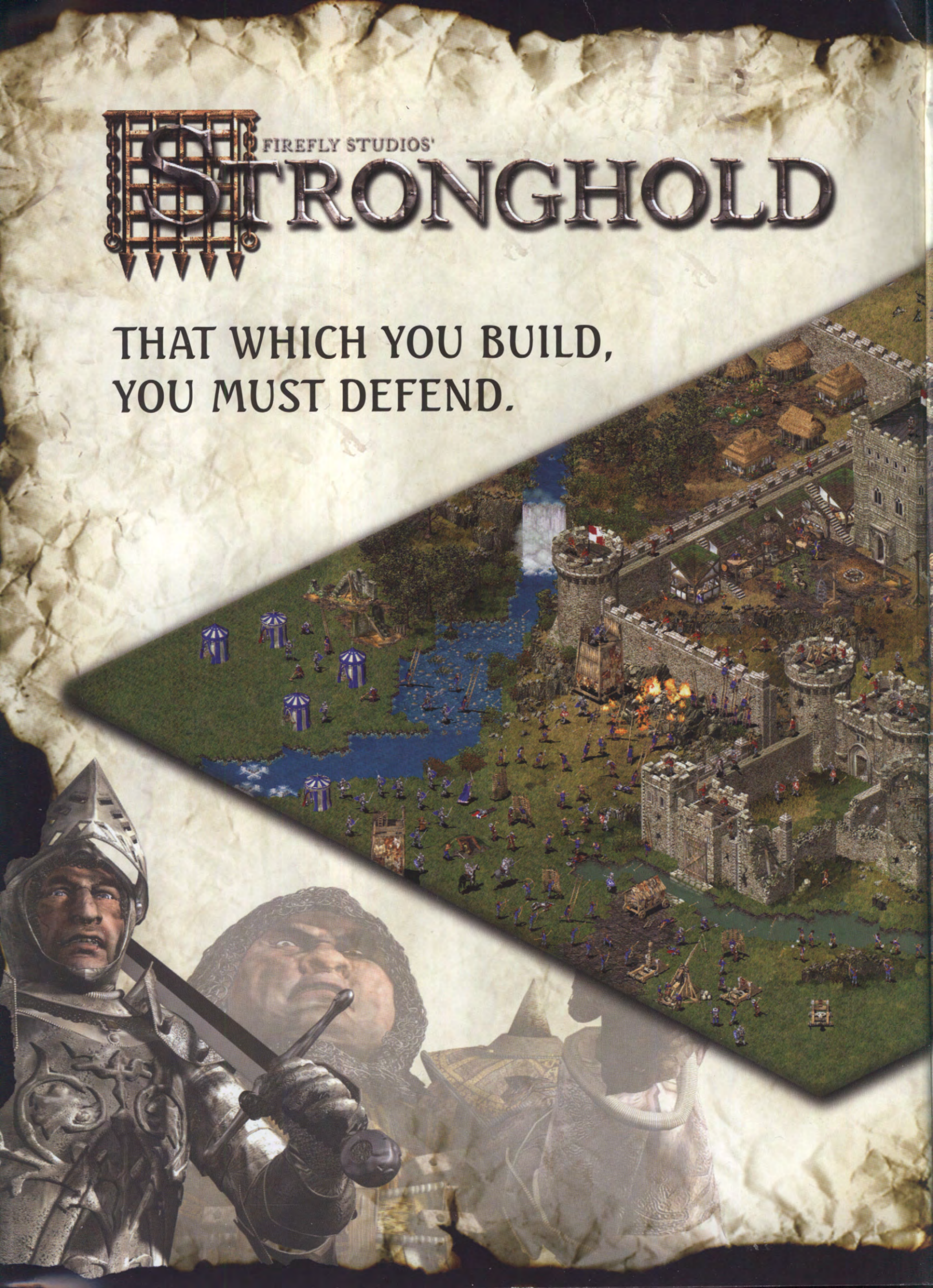
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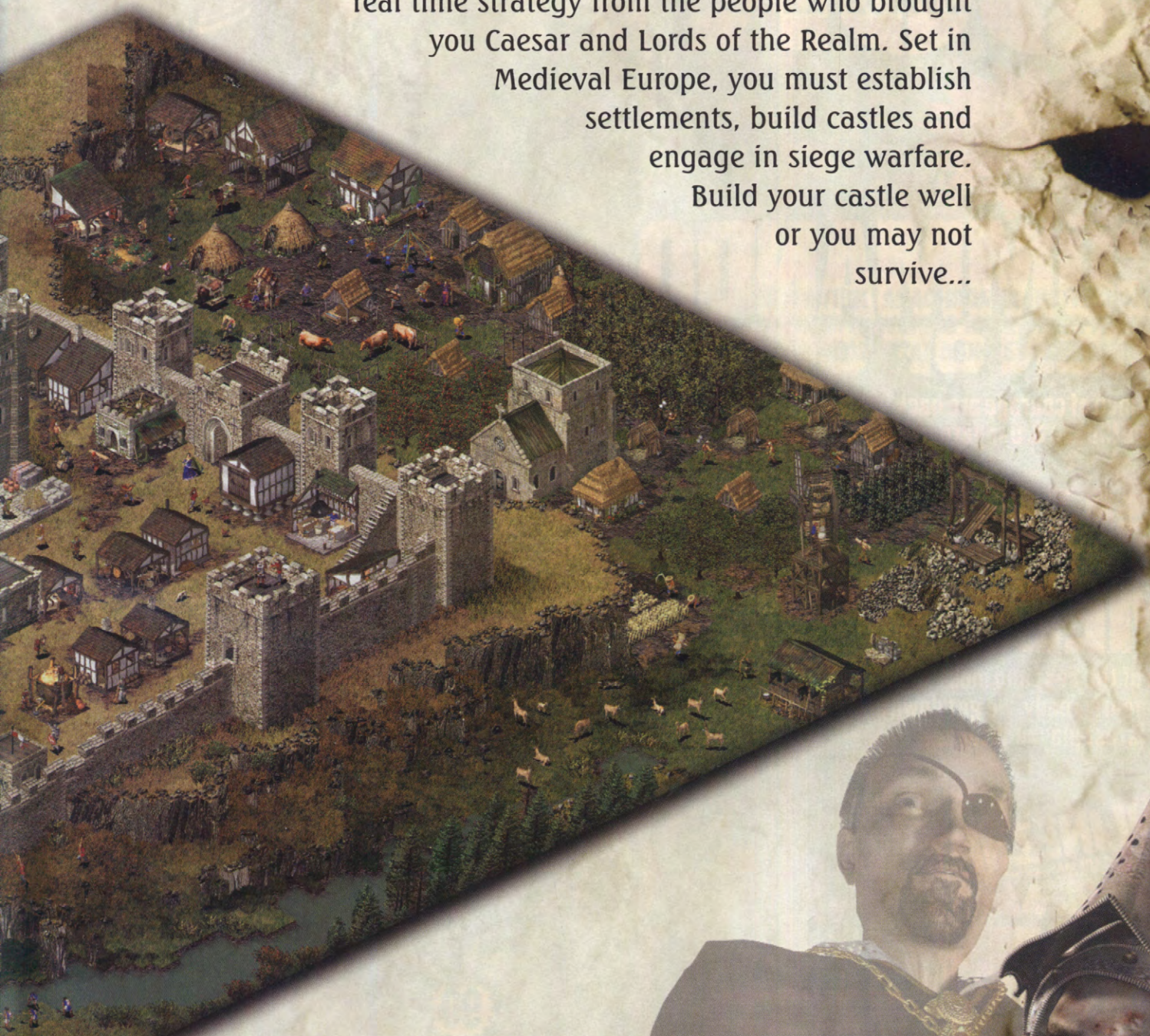
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OCTOBER 2001

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Sheep, Dog 'N' Wolf... and lots of lovely violence.

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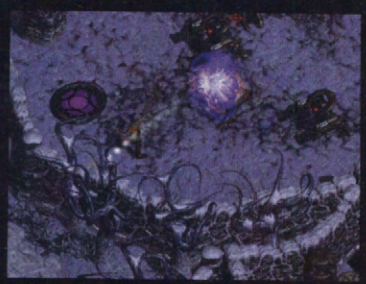
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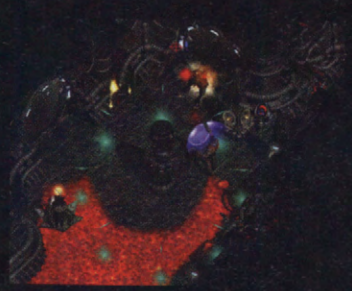
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PC Gamer Oct 2001.

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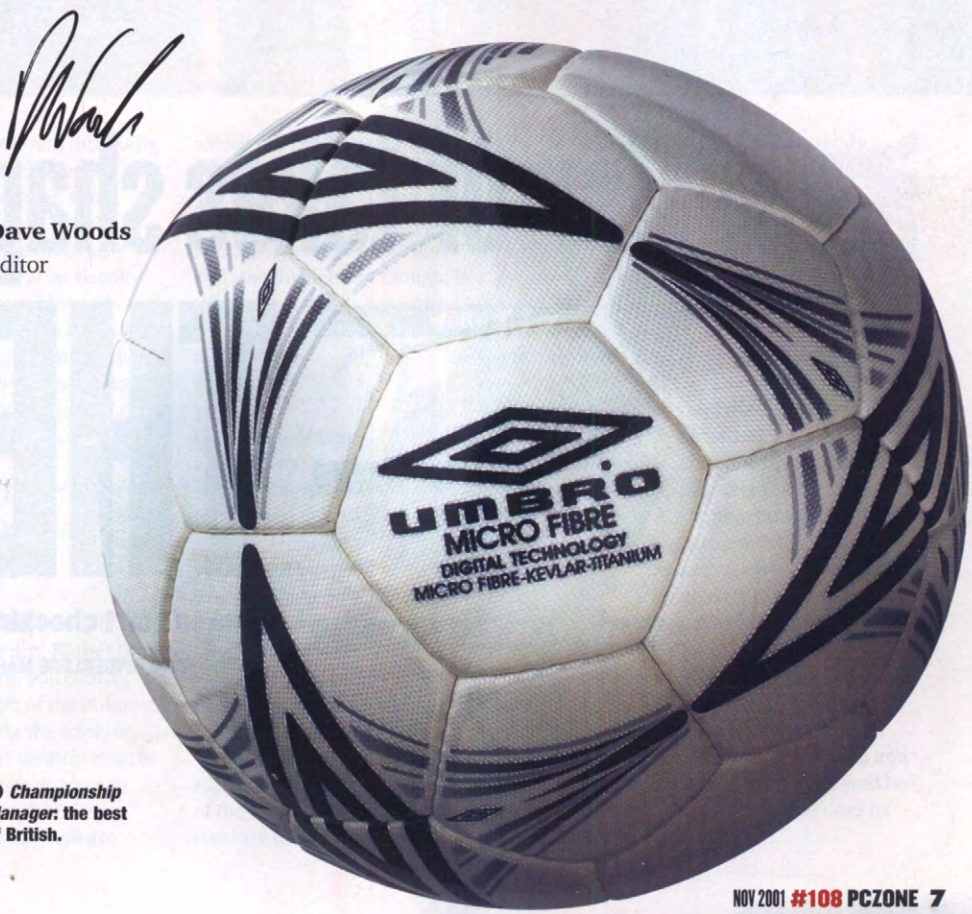
Do you ever get the feeling that Britain gets a raw deal because we live in the shadow of the US of A? Think about it – we have to wait for our Atlantic cousins to have their fill of all the major film releases before we can get our hands on them (except for the odd howler that no one wants to go and see anyway, like *Captain Correlli's Mandolin*), then we have to pay more for our clothes, more for our beer and more for games like *Serious Sam* than our overpaid and overweight brethren. The final straw happened this weekend, at ECTS, the 'biggest games show in the UK'. That it might be, but if I'd set up a stall in my garage this weekend, and dug out my old Dragon 32 classics, I might well have launched a serious challenge.

Why? Because ECTS was shunned by just about every major US games publisher, including (drum roll of shame) EA, Activision and Microsoft, despite the fact that all three of them were over at E3 in LA earlier in the year, giving it the big cheesy smiles and shouting 'awesome' at anyone that came within ten metres of their wares.

"If I'd set up a stall in my garage with my old Dragon 32 classics, I might well have launched a serious challenge to ECTS"

On the plus side, however, this meant that we didn't have to give up our weekend to attend the show on the Sunday, and we had plenty of spare time to rummage around the smalls of the sort of companies we don't normally have time to visit while we're sucking the corporate gristle of the big boys. And yes, it was necessary to spend that much time at the *Erotica Island* stall. The company's got big things in front of them.

Anyway, what do the Americans know? Britsoft has got something to celebrate this month with two classics in one issue from Eidos, the jewel in the crown of the British publishing industry. OK, they didn't go to ECTS either, and one of the games is Spanish, but who's counting?



Dave Woods
Editor

***Championship Manager*: the best of British.**



TOP STORY

Terror takes shape in...

THE THING

Time to start checking those blood samples

SPROUTING SPIDERLEGS MARK HILL

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Computer Artworks
PUBLISHER Vivendi
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2002
WEBSITE www.artworks.co.uk

IN SUMMARY

A sequel of sorts to the John Carpenter film, where a team of scientists in the Artic gets massacred by an alien who can assume the form of any of its victims. Fear, chaos and paranoia ensue.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Unlike that other cult horror film licence, *Evil Dead*, this looks stunning and has the originality to satisfy even the most hardcore fans. Controlling a team of soldiers who are snapping under the stress of the situation could create a really unique experience.



"Oh my God, that's disgusting."



That used to be a dog.



"You're the Thing!"
"No, you're the Thing!"
And so on.



"Watch it, you nearly had my eye out."

It may have sounded like one of our wishful Waiting To Happens when we announced a game based on John Carpenter's *The Thing* a few months back, but as soon as the screenshots started trickling in we knew this was going to be special. There's never been a better time to be a fan of this classic horror remake (if you don't already own the fantastic feature-packed DVD, go get it now), and developer Computer Artworks are staying very true to the film. The game begins where the movie ends, as a Norwegian and US team arrive in the Antarctic base to investigate what happened.

You might think the most obvious result would be a *Resident Evil* clone set in the snow, but in the hands of Computer Artworks it's turning into one of the most original and intriguing games currently in development. CA, in case you don't remember, were responsible for the flawed but imaginative *Evolva*. This practically guarantees *The Thing* will be visually stunning and full of new ideas. The screenshots should give you a pretty good idea about its looks, but it's the concept that will grab your attention.

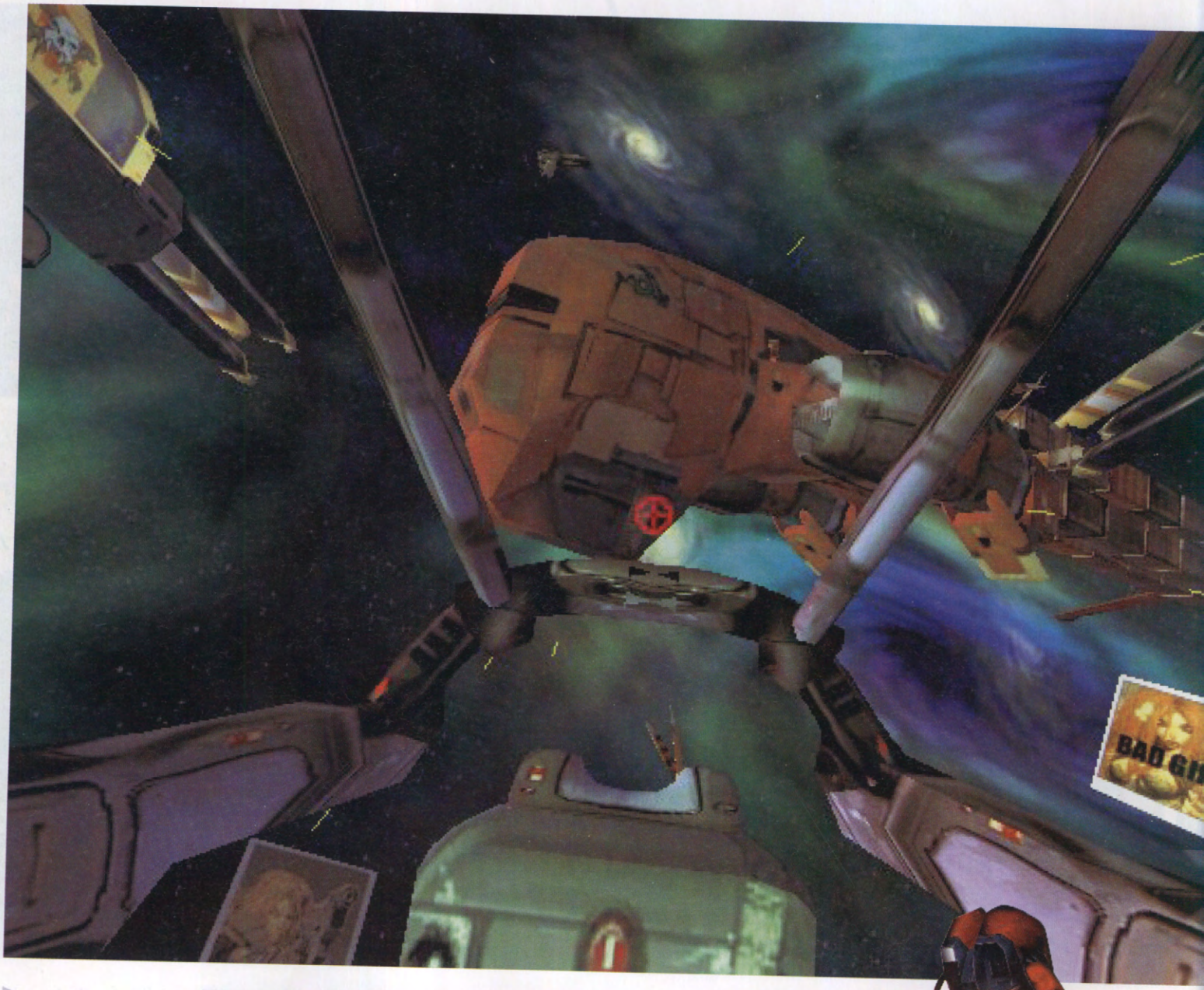
The film was as much about character interaction and paranoia as it was about horrific action set pieces, and the game reflects this. Rather than playing as a solo figure, you control Blake, the squad leader of the military personnel investigating the scientist camp. While you don't directly control any of the team characters, you can give them orders through hotkeys in pure *SWAT 3* fashion. There are soldiers to do the heavy fighting, engineers to use computers and solve any mechanical problems and medics to keep the whole party healthy. The most important and startling feature though, is that each of these characters has a full mental life, so you need to manage their levels of fear and trust as well as ordering them about. Almost anything you do will have a bearing on their behaviour, especially as they spiral into paranoia when they realise any one of them (or even you) could be the Thing.

"Each of these characters has a full mental life, so you need to manage their levels of fear and trust as well as well as ordering them about"

But your team-mates are just one of the forms the creature takes on. You'll be fighting Scuttlers (body pieces with legs like giant spiders), Walkers (humans with parts of alien anatomy shooting through them) and Ruptures (monstrous masses of flesh).

The Thing is anything but linear and there are always several ways to solve the situations you come across, whether they're brain-scraping puzzles or action sequences. The state of your team is always different and you can choose to use them in different ways. Even if they die you should still be able to make it through to the end. Of course, it will be a lot tougher that way.

With its unique blend of survival horror, puzzle-solving and team tactics, *The Thing* could well be one of those rare titles that does its licence justice. PZ



TOP STORY

Bold Fusion...



FALCONE: INTO THE MAELSTROM

Didn't he do *Rock Me Amadeus*?

HULL RAMMING Anthony Holden

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Point Blank
PUBLISHER Virgin
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Early 2002
WEBSITE NA

IN SUMMARY

It's a comic book adventure that casts you as Gabriel Falcone, a space pirate on a mission to screw over the tyrannical Legion. Arcade-style space combat intersperses seamlessly with first-person shooting on board a variety enemy vessels.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It could be the first game to effectively meld the FPS and space combat genres, and with the Unreal Warfare engine under its bonnet it promises to look superb. Indeed, battles with stunningly rendered enemy robots seen in teaser footage already have us salivating for more.



Falcone's universe was created by *2000AD* writer, Robbie Morrison.



The pirates have quite a camp superhero look about them.



The space combat is heavily influenced by Nintendo's *StarFox*.



That porter will never get off the ground.

Hole-digging and slow motion slapstick aside, the FPS genre isn't exactly bursting at the seams with novelty these days. The current crop of shooters may be the most fantastic looking yet, but they no longer promise the wild rocket ship ride to the future they once did. Things have slowed down a bit, innovation has become more difficult, sub-genres have proliferated and been set. Now the inevitable maturing process demands a new stage of development, and if other media are anything to go by that means only one thing: hybridisation. In other words, merging with other genres to make something new, or at least something that can pass for new. It's a trend that's been lurking around the underbrush for a while now, but is about to drop its trousers and flash its crossbreeding arse in our face with the forthcoming FPS/space shooter hybrid, *Falcone: Into The Maelstrom*.

Set in a sci-fi universe of warring pirate tribes and evil galactic tyrants, *Maelstrom* puts you as Gabriel Falcone, a washed-up space buccaneer who once terrorised solar systems with his piratical exploits and roguish charms. What's more, he's got a grudge against the foul galactic overlords, The Legion, and our guess is that the game's 20 levels will see you striving to overthrow their malevolent leader and bring his reign of terror to an end. That, or he'll turn out to be your Dad. It's classic space opera stuff, set in a deliberately comic book world of rusted metal interiors and vibrant, colourful characters.

"It's classic space opera stuff, set in a deliberately comic world"

The developers are confident that the combination of arcade space combat and traditional FPSing will slot together cleanly, as both modes take place in the first person, they share a consistent control system, and the Unreal Warfare engine technology powering the game allows you to move seamlessly between the two.

The gameplay possibilities thrown up by *Maelstrom*'s hybrid form are immense, and Point Blank already promise such delights as ramming your ship through the hulls of Legion battleships, hopping out and looting their riches on foot. As a secondary objective, each level will have a preset booty requirement, so you'll need to do plenty of plundering in order to progress. In addition, the more acts of piracy you perform, the more notoriety you gain throughout the galaxy, making it easier to recruit specialist crewmen to your cause. Stealing new weapons and spaceships along the way goes without saying.

The only possible spanner that could get in the works of this hugely promising title is that, as is the way with new trends, it may be beaten to the punch. Both *Breed* and *Bounty Hunter*, two games covered in recent issues of *ZONE*, boast a very similar FPS/space shooter hybrid structure. Only one will enjoy the benefits of being there first. PCZ





TOP STORY

Sharpen your sword...

DIVINE DIVINITY



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Larian Studios
PUBLISHER CDV
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2002
WEBSITE www.divinedivinity.com

IN SUMMARY

Take one of six characters (three male, three female) through a huge RPG world. Complete quests and vanquish foes in your search for true divinity and put an end to the resident evil force.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Beautifully detailed and immersive, with a much more interactive world than has previously been seen in an RPG. Together with the enhanced AI, this could well produce a new breed of role-player.

A smiting we will go

DARK ONE Rhianna Pratchett



Hmm... the pub, a spot of shopping, or a week-long dungeon bash?



Travel the world, see a few sights, kill a few people


Be warned: this could be lurking in your pubic hair kids.



You'll need to learn alchemy before you can make something useful out of old vegetables.

Let's face it, RPGs over the last few years have been ruled by the same few gaming godfathers, who really need no introduction. In their favour they have turned out consistently good, and consistently similar titles to a vast fan base they know is salivating for anything they can get their hands on. But we've dined on meat and potatoes for too long. The times they are a-changing, something's blowing in the wind – and it's not Martin in 'just stepped out of a salon' mode... it's *Divine Divinity*.

We admit that *Divine Divinity*, or *DivDiv* as it has affectionately come to be known, took us somewhat by surprise, which is why it wasn't covered in our RPG round-up in issue 104. *DivDiv* has appeared almost from nowhere from a relatively unknown – at least until now – developer, the Belgium-based Larian Studios. Like early man examining some strange object, we have poked it, prodded it, stuck it in our ears and given it a good sniff, and we can pronounce that it is looking very palatable indeed.

DivDiv is set in a typical RPG fantasy world, filled with the usual array of wizards, demons, orcs and suspicious men in big hats, which you explore with one of six characters. Both the *Baldur's Gate* and *Diablo* franchises could do with taking a few make-up tips from *DivDiv*, because graphically it's looking extremely pretty and supports a rare 1024x768 resolution.

The game is obviously trying to forge a new path somewhere between *BG* and *Diablo*, incorporating a relatively hardcore RPG storyline, yet with a substantial amount of hack 'n' slash and spell-casting action. But what *DivDiv* seems to be vying for above everything else is a highly immersive and interactive game world, where virtually everything you see on screen can be picked up, manipulated, eaten, or in moments of extreme panic, thrown at people's heads. For example, if you have the right knowledge you can pick herbs and use them to create potions, jump inside the bodies of creatures to do some undercover work and even make poison out of rotten food and use it to up the damage potential of your weapon.

The AI, which is something that has never yet been properly addressed in RPGs, also looks like it will be a step forward if Larian can deliver on their promises. Each monster will have its own plan of attack, and certain creatures will be so advanced they will actually go and round up their mates to set ambushes for you. *DivDiv* might keep us all sitting in our darkened RPG caves playing with sticks, but it may just hold the secret of fire. We're hoping for the latter, because we're freezing our arses off here. PZ



"If you have the right knowledge, herbs can be picked to create potions, you can jump inside the bodies of creatures to do some undercover work and even make poison out of rotten food"

BULLETIN

Moan, moan, moan

NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden



We love games, we really do. And yet sometimes we can't help but lapse into a bit of cynicism about the very medium for which we've given up otherwise promising careers as rock stars/body-builders/celebrity DJs? Personally, I blame the industry.

At this year's ECTS, Europe's premier games trade show, hundreds of press from all over the world gathered together to moan about games and how crap the event was. I turned up on the opening day and met up with a friend from the biz, finding him at the bar with some other hacks and a few nice PR ladies. "Seen anything good?" I enquired, with all the naiveté of youth.

"No, it's all muck," replied my hardened colleague, "Beer?"

It wasn't really all muck. I'd like to think that he just meant that, as no big announcements were happening apart from Blizzard's, the event presented an ideal chance for us to see some familiar games in their latest incarnations.

It is easy to forget that, while it's a cynical industry we work with, it's still great games that really count. And they were there in abundance at ECTS. Just take a look at *World Of Warcraft* and the other wonders on these pages if you're in any doubt.

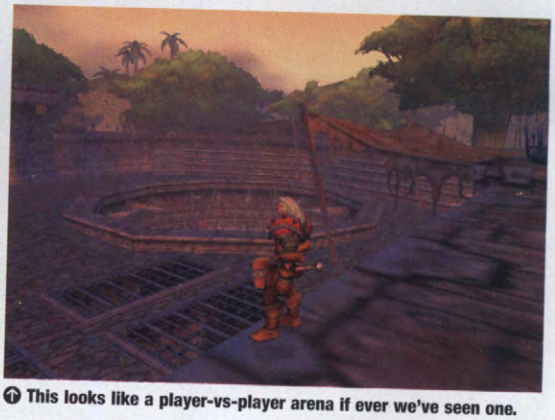
A lot of publishers stopped caring about games long ago. Most of the other magazines out there have also stopped caring – too busy bending over for the publishers. It's just lucky we've still got *PC ZONE*, keepin' it real and pullin' no punches. Or something like that.

Warcraft online

Blizzard ventures into the massively multiplayer realm with *World Of Warcraft*



That would be your Tauren then.



This looks like a player-vs-player arena if ever we've seen one.

We all knew Blizzard had something big up its sleeve for ECTS. The smart money was on a *Starcraft* sequel, but rumours of a possible *Warcraft* RPG or online game have been circulating for so long that when the announcement finally came its impact was minimal. Plus there was the fact that the press release was accidentally leaked on the Internet two days prior to the official press conference. None of this made senior producer Bill Roper's task any easier when he stepped forward to sell the game to a roomful of jaded European games journos in the sweaty confines of an ECTS conference box. Luckily for him, *World Of Warcraft* looked simply stunning.



As you can probably discern from the title, *World Of Warcraft* essentially takes the much loved *Warcraft* universe and launches it online, dispensing with RTS shenanigans and going for a straight MMORPG. Creating a character, forming parties and alliances, questing, levelling up – all the standard RPG elements are present, but with a hugely simplified interface and distinct lack of stats. Combat is frequent, fast and action-oriented, borrowing a lot more from *Diablo*'s point-and-click immediacy than any kind of hardcore RPG. Player-versus-player combat will only be possible by consensus, perhaps taking place in a designated battle arena of the sort visible in the screenshot above.

While the playable races developed thus far are limited to human, orc and tauren – a bull-like race originally developed as a support race for the orcs in *Warcraft III* – several more unannounced races are set to follow. We spent some time chatting with Bill Roper while his crew demoed the game for us, and he was at pains to point out that a new race would only be introduced when the team was satisfied it had sufficient unique appeal and novel gameplay possibilities. "It's a thing we like to call concentrated coolness," he drawled.

At this early (but surprisingly advanced) stage of development, the most refreshing thing about *WoW* is the wilful simplicity of the gameplay, complemented by a cheerful console aesthetic of vivid colours and cartoon-like buildings. It's part of a concerted effort to give the game broader appeal, and since even the most adamant goblin-haters on the *ZONE* team have been won over by the sumptuous looks of game, it might just pay off. Look out for more coverage in the next issue of *PC ZONE* Online.

Blizzard • ETA TBC • www.worldofwarcraft.com



Combat is still a bit clunky, but otherwise it all looks lovely.



The generous character options allow for plenty of individuality.

THE PCZONE CHARTS
Read 'em, love 'em, win 'em
P.23



EMULATION ZONE
The best of GBA emulators
P.24



MAN WHO KNOWS
It's all too easy in this dirty industry
P.30



HOTSHOTS
Aliens Vs Predator – the best pics yet
P.32





Strident **was just one of many fantastic looking Korean games on display.**



Project Nomads **was awarded Best PC Game in show.**



The quirky ***Paradise Cracked*** **could prove interesting.**



We played ***Breed*** **at ECTS, and it rocks.**

ECTS 2001

A scattering of gaming goodies emerges from a quiet ECTS

ECTS is dead. Or so say the industry doomsayers, in response to dwindling attendance figures and a failure to attract major players. Whether through miserliness, arrogance or political manoeuvring, key international publishers have increasingly chosen to boycott Europe's biggest computer game trade show over the past two years, resulting in a situation where the biggest names on the floor are Infogrames and Ubi Soft, and the most significant announcement is Blizzard's foray into massively multiplayer.

Much of the blame lies with major publishers who stage separate shows to display their wares, most notably EA and Activision. Worse still is the likes of Nintendo, whose own show is designed to conflict with and draw attention away from ECTS. Moves such as this have a knock-on effect as other significant players start to question the value of the event, such that where once ECTS vied to be the European E3, it is now a very different proposition.

Staged over three days at the brand new ExCel venue in London's Docklands, ECTS 2001 was a subdued affair to say the least. The most widely appreciated booth of the 200-odd on offer was probably the *Erotica Island* display, where three bikini-clad ladies strained to do justice to Sarah Swallows and her digitised gal-pals.

But beyond such filth, there was actually something interesting going on. The lack of big names allowed several minor developers and smaller European publishers to come to the fore, and there were a number of potential jewels in the interactive junk heap. CDV put in a strong showing with *Nomads*, *Breed* and *Divine Divinity*. Fishtank presented a credible line-up with titles such as *Aquanox* and the superb looking *Chaser*. Obscure Russian publisher Buka hawked some promising wares in the form of *Paradise Cracked* and *Echelon: Wind Warriors*.

Another interesting development was the influx of Korean publishers to the show. Huge PC fans, the Koreans have been churning out a variety of outlandish-looking games for years now, though the unique style of the games has always seemed to pose an obstacle to localisation. This year, however, companies such as eSofnet and Game Infinity threw out an overwhelming array of soon-to-be translated products, many of which were, on the surface at least, quite stunning. We're going to be taking a more in-depth look at the Korean connection in our next issue.

While many walked away from ECTS disappointed, dismissing the show as a complete bust, here at *ZONE* we prefer to be quietly comforted. Trends such as the continuing explosion of untapped talent from Germany and Eastern Europe, the efforts of French developers to shed their Gallic eccentricity and the Korean push into English language territories all prove there's a great deal more going on in the industry than self-important US publishers would have us believe.

WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

There's something exciting afoot at www.pczone.co.uk. Here's a small guide to the new and improved website which comes free with your favourite magazine...

If you've logged onto the Internet in the last couple of weeks, you'll have noticed that our website has just undergone the most dramatic transformation in its entire history. Now part of a group of sites that cover every gaming platform you'll care to know about, www.pczone.co.uk is the only address you'll need to remember for all of your gaming needs.

The radical new redesign is the first thing you're going to notice, but with a powerful search facility, helper bars on the left, format filters and new easy icons across the top, you should be able to dive straight in. To make it even easier, here's a quick guide to the biggest and the best of the millions and millions of new features you can start playing around with right away.

PICK A MACHINE, ANY MACHINE...

Because *PC ZONE*'s website is just one of the sites in the new Vortal system (we asked the question and apparently it's a vertical portal) you can now check up on information on any platform from within www.pczone.co.uk. If you're not interested in anything but the PC, you can use the Format Filters in the top left-hand corner to ensure you only get PC-specific information. However, if you're interested in reading about related news on other platforms, just tick the machines you're interested in.

Once you've done this, you can browse through any of the familiar sections, news, reviews, previews, features, competitions and downloads. At the bottom of any piece are a set of icons that enable you to comment on anything we've posted up, email the article to a friend, or format it so you can print it out and read it under your duvet with a torch. You can also click to show any related articles, which means that if you're reading about *Quake IV* you can instantly find out anything else that's been written on the subject. If you see anything you might want to come back to, you can fire up the new Scrapbook feature, which allows you to store articles for perusal at a later date.



The brand new homepage in glorious technicolour.



We'll constantly update the release dates for all your favourite games.

BUT WHEN CAN I BUY IT?

What else have we got up our brand new sleeves? For starters, there's a constantly updated list of current release dates, which means you can instantly find out when you can buy your favourite game. The database is updated with new information every week, which means you'll be the first to hear about delays, revised releases and which games have just been unleashed onto your shelves. Then there's the Screenshot Archive, which does exactly what it says on the tin, albeit in a most excellent way. Instead of scrabbling around for resources, you can find every single screenshot on the site from this list of indexed games. There's also a bang up-to-date chart, which shows you the current PC releases, and how they stack-up in the full-on multi-format chart.

YOU TALKING TO ME?

One of the most popular features of our old site has also been updated. By logging onto our forums, you can meet up with like-minded or downright weird individuals and chew the fat. This is also where you can ask us questions about the magazine, slag us off to high heaven, ask for help with a problem or just try to get us to divulge titbits about our personal lives. And, to celebrate the brand new design, we've incorporated brand new software that makes it even easier to get your point across.

"With a powerful search facility, helper bars and format filters, you should be able to dive straight in"

As part of our commitment to making *PC ZONE*'s website the only

I'M THE KING OF THE WORLD

The most exciting new addition is the world ranking system...

The Internet is starting to come into its own at last. Broadband connections are here and games like *Quake III* and *Counter-Strike* are played by thousands across the world at any one time. But playing with others is only the tip of the iceberg. We've joined forces with Csports.net to bring you exclusive reports on just how well you're doing against the world's elite. Using specially coded software, we can monitor every game that's played across the Internet to bring you your very own world ranking. Using the World Rankings, you can also track down individuals, find out how they're doing in relation to you and track which servers they like playing on so that you can meet up for a head-to-head. This is probably the most exciting development in online gaming right now, and www.pczone.co.uk is the only place you'll find it.

one you'll ever need to visit, we've also signed up one of the Internet's largest databases for cheats, tips and walkthroughs. If you need help for any game, on any platform, you'll find it here. Cheatstation covers more than 8,500 games over 40 different platforms, with around 30,000 cheats at the time of going to press. And, in keeping with the spirit of community, you've even got the option to add your own cheats to our bulging drawers.

When you register on our site we'll give you your very own Kudos bar, that grows each time you visit our site. Think of it as a levelling up process, where the more you browse, the more powerful you become. What do you get for your Kudos? Substantial discounts on products and services, along with the knowledge that you're part of the biggest and best PC games site in Europe. See you there. PZ

REGISTER AND BENEFIT

Absolutely anyone can log onto www.pczone.co.uk and check out the best gaming site on the Internet, but we like to treat our regulars to something a little special.





Play a game online and we'll tell you where you stand in the world rankings.

STOP MASTICATING

Chew things over for too long and you'll have no guests left.

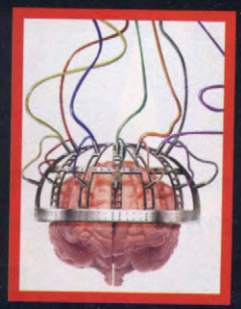
You've planned and built your own zoo. Now you've got to manage it. 46 species of animal. All hungry. So hungry, in fact, that if you don't cage and feed them properly they'll help themselves to your guests! Designed well, your zoo will be popular and profitable. Otherwise it'll be a recipe for disaster.

ZOO TYCOON

www.zoo-tycoon.co.uk

Microsoft

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TECHHEAD

DVD+RW draws first blood, plus how a new gamepad could improve your skills

TECHNO BABBLER Carlos Ruiz

DVD-R CONFLICT

DVD+RW or DVD-RW? It's all about the pluses and minuses

As most of you should already be at least partially aware, there are more than a few complications surrounding the recording future of everyone's favourite media format. Unfortunately, the relative simplicity of the humble CD-R/CD-RW duo couldn't be emulated in the DVD equivalent, and instead we have a big dispute between no less than three differing standards which are all battling for supremacy.

The first contender is DVD+RW, which is backed by the likes of Sony, Philips Electronics, Dell, Ricoh, Yamaha and Hewlett-Packard. DVD+RW discs will be equally capable of storing both data and movies, pleasing the whole crowd. The capacity is 4.7Gb, which is massive in comparison to the paltry 650Mb of CD-R discs, while you'll be able to record video and view it on a typical home DVD player.



The competing standards for DVD recording take their corners.

To put the icing on the cake, you can erase and record as much as you like, making the whole prospect seem about ten times better than CD-R and CD-RW. The first commercially available DVD+RW drive will be HP's dvd100i, which should cost around £400-450 if exchange rates hold true (converted from the US price of $599). Blank discs are likely to be priced at around £10-12.

The two other standards are DVD-RAM, which is fine for data but won't accommodate the majority of home DVD players, and DVD-RW, which looks to be the biggest threat to DVD+RW because of their inherent similarities. Compaq and Apple are the main supporters of DVD-RW, and are such big players in the industry that the outcome will be especially hard to predict.

HP will be incorporating the dvd100i in their high-end PCs this Christmas, and the industry is expecting the new glut of DVD-writers to boost PC sales in the same way that CD-R drives did a couple of years ago. Depending on how the standards issue pans out, the appeal of DVD-writers could potentially catch on far more quickly, but then again, consumer confusion could keep sales down and prices high for longer than expected.

As always, the important thing is not to be too hasty with your money. Unless you know something we don't, of course, and even then you'll save a fair bit of cash if you wait until sometime next year. We'll keep you updated on the situation in the meantime...

SHOCK PADS

Gamepads that deal out electric shocks are the way forward

Forget about force feedback – you could soon be receiving electric shocks from your trusty controller as punishment for being crap at computer games. The new BioForce gamepad may or may not catch on, but either way, fans won't lose out through lack of developer support. This is because it requires no more than support for force feedback itself (and that's already widespread), which the pad reads and converts into electric 'stimulation'.



Whack the shock quotient up to the max and you'll play amazingly.

'At the lowest setting, the shock generally feels like a mild tingle, but at its highest setting the controller can deliver a stronger shock, one that can make you drop your controller,' boasts the documentation. We don't doubt it for a minute. A typical voltage will make your muscles spasm and tighten, in much the same way as those easy workout devices are (allegedly) able to give you a six-pack and bulging Korda-esque pecs.

In future incarnations, the electrode pads idea should be scrapped. They're probably quite fiddly and make you look like some kind of mental patient. Surely you could have metal nodes under your palms on the grips of the pad, and a switch to turn the shocks on or off. But anyway, it's a small gripe at this early stage.

Tests are under way to analyse the overall safety of BioForce before it is due to be released this year, although there's no info on a UK date as yet. The main selling point will be the enhanced immersion in games, but it could also be legitimately marketed as a means of improving your gaming prowess, since the prospect of receiving a shock every time you clip your car on a corner is likely to result in record lap times before you know it. It could even be sold as a means of exercising while you play...

FACTCANNON

ATI's second generation R200 chip will appear in the form of the Radeon 8500 this month, priced at around the £300 mark. The 0.15-micron core runs at a very speedy 250MHz and has enjoyed a thorough makeover since the last Radeon outing, so it'll be looking to pick a fight with the GeForce3 as soon as its final drivers have been completed. The new Radeon 7500 (formerly known as the SE) is the value option, as it is essentially a streamlined Radeon 1 comparable to a GeForce2 Pro.



IBM has gone one better than Deep Blue with the new ASCI White, which is 1,000 times faster and officially the world's fastest supercomputer. It's reportedly capable of performing more than 12 trillion calculations per second, with exactly 8,192 processors housed in boxes filling two whole basketball courts and weighing the same as 17 adult elephants. It cost $110million and was transported in 28 moving vans to its location in California, where it will be used to model nuclear explosions.



Super-boffins left the comfort of their homes last month to attend the Hackers At Large 2001 'festival' at the University of Twente in Holland. The event included a ritual burning of all things Microsoft, as well as the prerequisite sharing of trade secrets and debate of hacking issues. It was all done in good taste, with industrial strength reefers doing the rounds – although rumours of an undercover FBI presence soured the occasion.



PLAY FOR FREE AT THE PLAYING FIELDS

1 HOUR FREE WORTH £6

The PlayingFields

DISCOUNT SLIP

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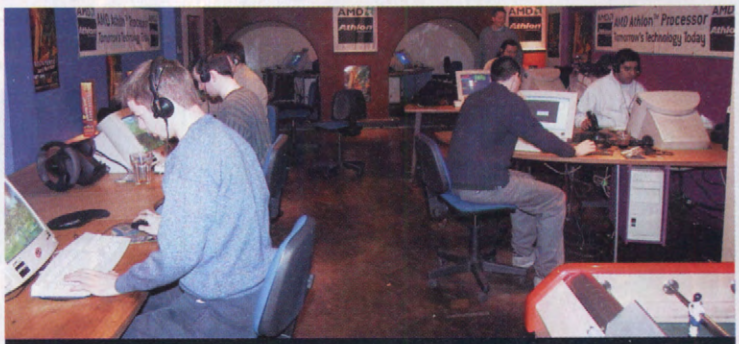
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This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between September 20 and October 18, 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London W1, UK. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of *PC ZONE*, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.



There's a bar to retire to when you get tired of fragging.

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA Geforce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (to the left of this page) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.

HOOF HEARTED?

ZOO TYCOON

Ah, the sweet smell of success. Or not.

If you think you could design, build and run your own zoo, then Zoo Tycoon is right up your street. 46 species of animal, each with their own unique habits, needs and characteristics. Look after them well and your zoo will be popular and profitable. Mistreat them, and they'll cause an absolute stink.

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Microsoft

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THRONE OF DARKNESS

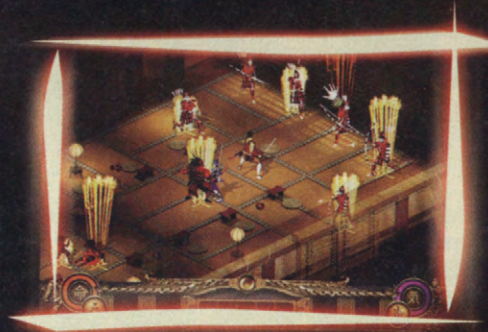
魔

7 Samurai to stand against Evil





Lead 7 distinct characters in various formation of 4 through ten huge environments inspired from Japanese mythology



Easy to handle and fast-paced action role-playing with innovative character AI and more than 30 commands to use against more than 20 varieties of creatures



Original muli-player system allowing up to 8 simultaneous players online

SIERRA™

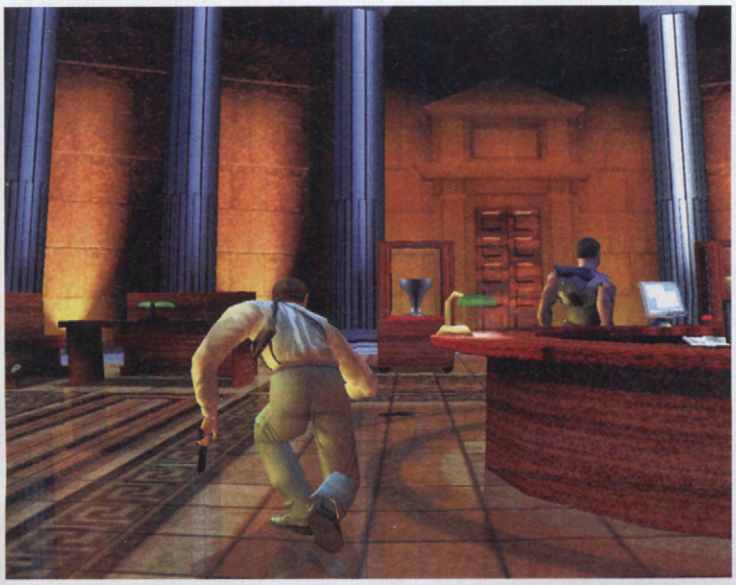
www.sierra-online.co.uk

CLICK entertainment



PC CD-ROM

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Excuse me, but can you direct me to the gents'?



Good Cop: has a good think before killing.



Bad Cop: uses two guns to kill schoolkids.

Black & White

But you only play one animal in *Good Cop, Bad Cop*

Unfortunately, this isn't a multiplayer game where you take it in turns with a friend to alternately soften/beat up a fellow player who's chained to a chair. Instead the title refers to the inner turmoil of a cop who finds out that the routine case he's investigating involves the criminals who killed his father a couple of decades back – now how about that for bad luck?

The game is a third-person action/adventure, but instead of dictating to you, you get the choice of going all out for revenge (bad) or playing things by the badge (good). If it works, the moral overtones could prove to be an interesting addition to a genre that's crying out for new ideas. *Good Cop, Bad Cop* is being developed by Revolution Software, of *Broken Sword* and *Beneath a Steel Sky* fame, and Tony Warriner of Revolution claims the game is going to be 'completely different.'

Revolution • ETA TBC • www.revolution.co.uk

Street flighter

New York Race was a surprising highlight of ECTS

As much as some of us at *ZONE* despised the mess of sci-fi appropriation that was Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*, no one could deny it had one or two cool moments. Aside from the fifth element herself bouncing around in a few strips of bandage, the obvious highlight was the vertiginous taxi ride through a futuristic New York, diving and dodging through insanely interweaving layers of airborne traffic. It was one of those classic 'made to be a videogame' moments, and the only surprise is that it's taken this long for someone to do it. While no official licence exists, *New York Race* is the obvious result of that moment.

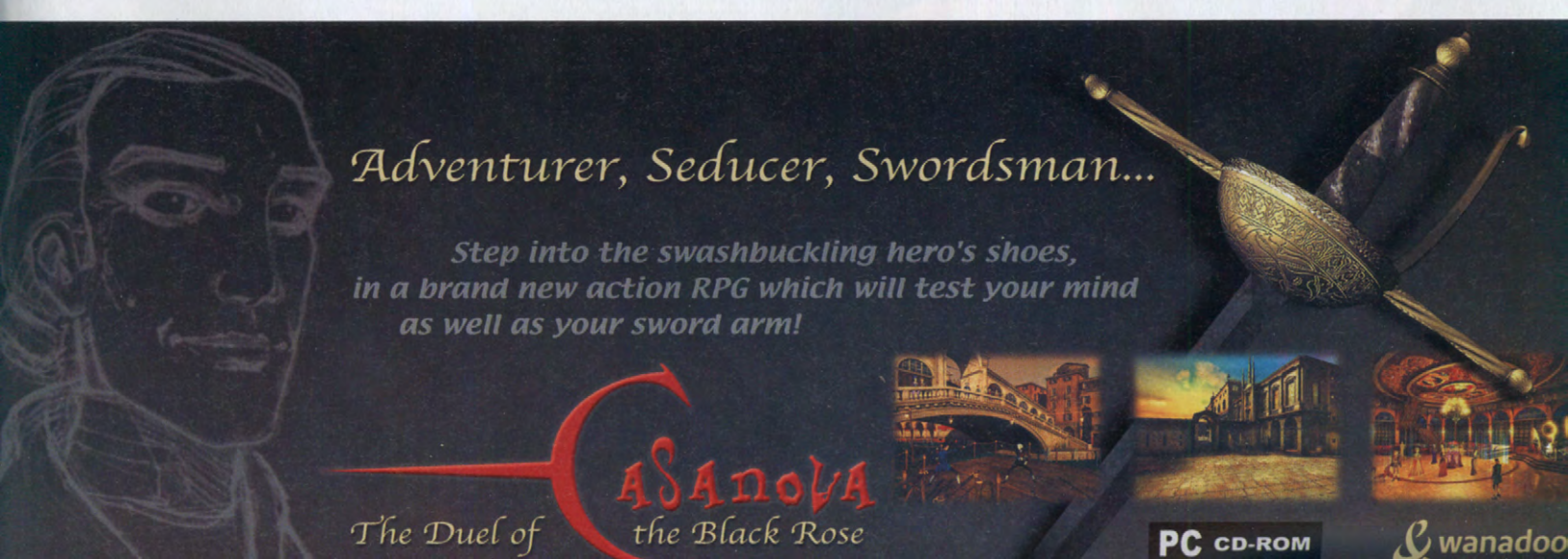
With intense high-speed racing and futuristic flying cars, the other clear reference point for *NY Race* is the *WipEout* series. Many familiar elements from those games are present, including a choice of flying cars, various weapon pick-ups and turbo boosts, as well as a resolutely arcade aesthetic and suitably effects-laden visuals. The main difference is the replacement of the narrow twisting tracks of *WipEout* with the skyscrapers and canyon-like streets of a futuristic New York. And instead of just hovering a bit, the vehicles truly fly, adding an extra level of insanity to the proceedings.

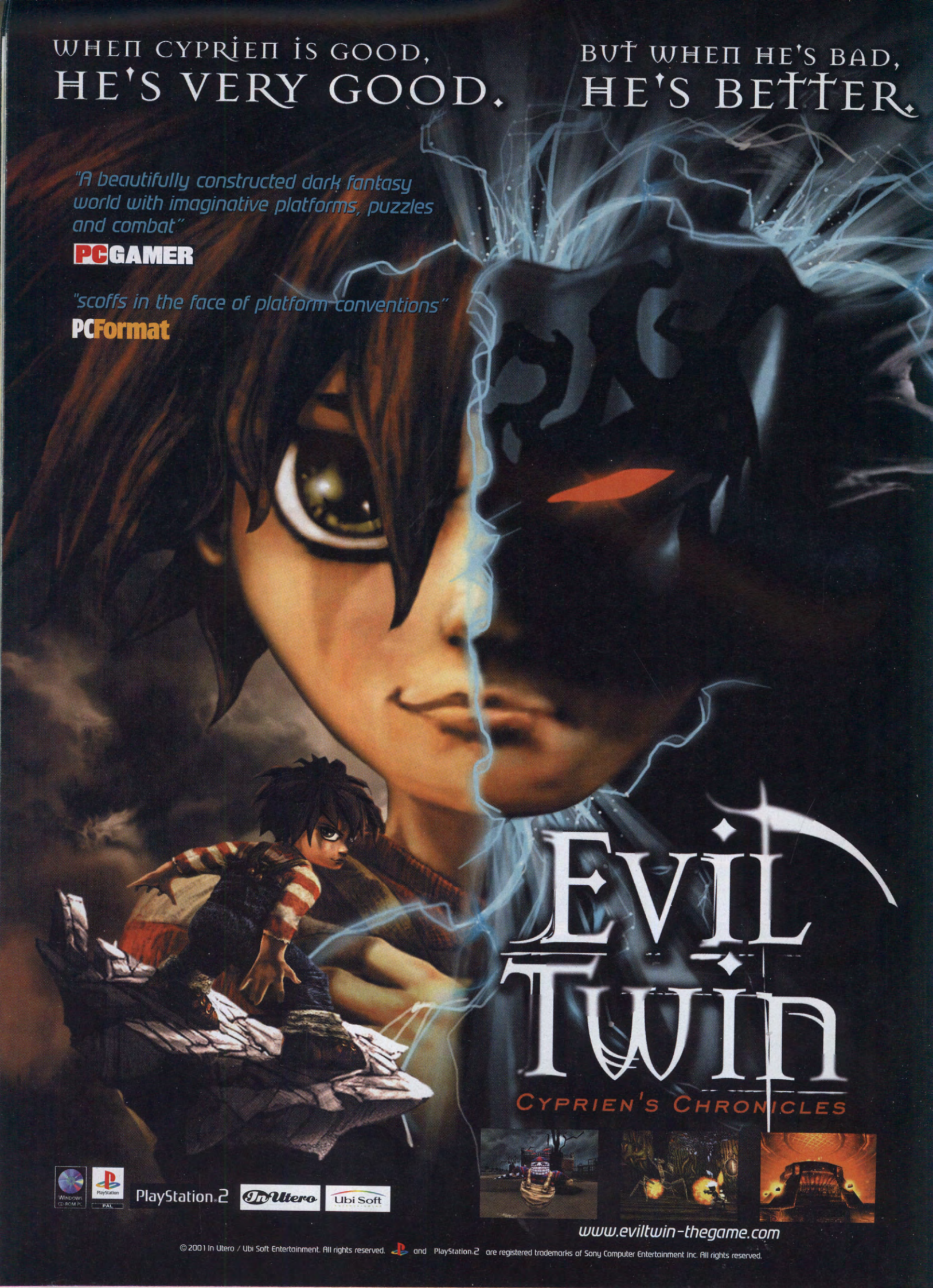
We've been keeping our eye on the very similarly styled *Beam Breakers* in the works at German outfit Similis, but *NY Race* surprised us at ECTS with better visuals and a more convincing design style. Kalisto have even employed the person responsible for the original taxi scenes in *The Fifth Element* as a designer on the game. We'll keep you informed on what could become an interesting race.

Kalisto • ETA November 16 • www.kalisto.com



The ability to strafe in any direction should produce an interesting set of control dynamics.





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CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not



The smash hit of the summer.

THE Virgin megastores TOP10

AUG	SEP	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	MAX PAYNE	REMEDY	TAKE 2	90%
RE	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
3	30	OPERATION FLASHPOINT	BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE	CODE MASTERS	90%
NA	4	SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR/MONGOL INVASION	CREATIVE ASSEMBLY	EA	93%/83%
NA	5	BALDUR'S GATE II/BG: THRONE OF BHAAL	BIOWARE	INTERPLAY	85%/82%
10	6	TROPICO	POPTOP SOFTWARE	TAKE 2	59%
RE	7	SIMCITY 3000 UK EDITION	MAXIS	EA	83%
2	8	DEUS EX	ION STORM	EIDOS	94%
RE	9	BLACK & WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	94%
RE	10	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

AUG	SEP	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	MAX PAYNE	REMEDY	TAKE 2	90%
2	2	OPERATION FLASHPOINT	BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE	CODE MASTERS	90%
5	3	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
6	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
7	5	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
NE	6	MECHCOMMANDER 2	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%
NE	7	STAR TREK DS9: DOMINION WARS	GIZMO	PAN INTERACTIVE	64%
10	8	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
RE	9	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
NE	10	ARCANUM	TROIKA GAMES	VIVENDI	84%

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: In which US city is Remedy's hit shooter *Max Payne* based?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ11A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Oct 18 2001

- Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

Not a bad line-up, all things considered, though of course the omnipresence of *The Sims* remains a mystery. It's surprising that there hasn't been a slew of shameless rip-offs cashing in on the popularity of virtual voyeurism, but I guess that's something to be thankful for.

wingwalker

The brilliant thing about *The Sims* is that its ongoing popularity ensures that Maxis continues nurturing and supporting the community. On top of the proliferation of user add-ons on the Net, it makes for unparalleled longevity. The same could be said of *Half-Life* – without *Counter-Strike*, *Half-Life* would not still be in the charts. With no multiplayer modes or mod potential, *Max Payne* definitely won't enjoy the same longevity.

boy_sets_fire

It's a nice surprise to see *Arcanum* in the Top 10. *Baldur's Gate* is one thing, but *Arcanum* is hardly a big name. I'm a big RPG fan, and I think it's brilliant to see that RPGs are finally starting to make it into the mainstream.

Cragg'nuth

Star Trek: Armada was a little underrated, but *Dominion Wars* shouldn't be getting in the charts. (Do these charts allow for games that are returned for being too buggy?) *Max Payne* is the coolest PC game out there at the moment. *MechWarrior 2* is good too though: far better than the original. And *Arcanum* should muster a cult following – word of mouth may keep it in the charts for another month or two.

PenguinJim

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

The only minor surprises here are the appearance of *Arcanum* and *Dominion Wars* in the month's top-sellers. On the one hand it's good to see that a relatively minor RPG with solid gameplay values can shift a few units, while disappointing to see that punters still flock to licences like *Star Trek* without bothering to consult *ZONE* beforehand. As for *MechCommander 2*, its entry at mid-field doesn't bode well for its fortunes. The first game was a minor hit, but didn't sell well enough to guarantee the fortunes of this altogether superior sequel. The only other noteworthy change is that *Black & White* has dropped out of the Top 10 after a long and well-deserved stay. Although, with *Creature Isles* and various online enhancements on the way, I'm willing to predict that it'll be back in no time.

Anthony Holden

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO

1. **The Sims** *(EA)*
2. **Deus Ex** *(Eidos)*
3. **Grand Prix 3** *(Hasbro)*
4. **Champ Man 99/00** *(Eidos)*
5. **Shogun: Total War** *(EA)*

2 YEARS AGO

1. **Tiberian Sun** *(EA)*
2. **Champ Man 3** *(Eidos)*
3. **SW: The Phantom Menace** *(Activision)*
4. **Hidden & Dangerous** *(Take 2)*
5. **FA Premier League STARS** *(EA)*

5 YEARS AGO

1. **Quake** *(GT/id)*
2. **F1GP2** *(MicroProse)*
3. **Z** *(Warner Interactive)*
4. **Theme Park** *(EA)*
5. **Champ Man 2** *(Eidos)*

EMULATION ZONE

STUART CAMPBELL REPORTS FROM A WORLD WHERE NO PLATFORM IS OUT OF REACH

If there's one thing guaranteed to make a hard-working, conscientious games magazine look like an idiot, it's trying to keep up with the dynamic world of emulation. Faster-moving and harder to get a grip of than a greasy ferret with somewhere important to be, no sooner do you nail down the emu scene than it gnaws its own leg off and skitters away to wreak chicken-shed havoc on your production schedules. (Get on with it – Ed.)

In our big up-to-speed emulation feature two issues ago, we noted a few things about Game Boy Advance emulators: "None of them have sound, they only run a few games and you need a pretty tasty PC to get full speed out of them, but given the speed of emulation development, it won't be long before those deficiencies are ironed out."

Proving once again how right we are, literally the day after that issue hit the streets, not one but two GBA emulators showed up, running a large majority of Advance games full speed and with glorious sound and music. Virtual GBA, written by veteran emu coder Marat Fayzullin, is a pretty impressive piece of work with decent compatibility, speed and sound, but it costs $35 for the registered version, and let's face it, who's going to pay that? Luckily, then, VGBA was pretty much instantly superceded by a far better emu, the extremely impressive DreamGBA. Updated on a more or less weekly basis (it was on version 2.1 at the time of writing), DreamGBA runs around 98 per cent of GBA titles so far (of which there are already over 80), with near-perfect sound and a variety of graphics modes that allow just about any PC to run the emu at acceptable speed. Excitingly, there's even a 'Real GBA' display option, which simulates the GBA's LCD display with trainspotter accuracy by building it up from thousands of visible individual little crystals. The effect is undeniably authentic, and as it's like looking at your PC monitor through a fine wire mesh (especially if you're using the full-screen display), it renders DreamGBA almost as hard to see as the real machine's notoriously dark screen. Now that's dedication.

The trouble with Game Boy games has always been, of course, that unlike PC games, with demos conveniently mounted on the front of *PC ZONE*, you don't get to try them out before you have to cough up 35 quid. But now, thanks to DreamGBA, you have no excuse for ever buying a duffer again. (Plus, you'll be able to use it to figure out what all that stuff was you could never see on the real thing unless you were standing directly under the floodlights at Old Trafford with an electron microscope.)

LINKS

- http://DreamGBA.yeah.net DreamGBA homepage
- www.komkon.org/fms/VGB Virtual GBA homepage



The classic *Super Mario Bros 2.*



Pac-Man Arrangement, from *Namco Pac-Man Collection* on GBA.



This is (checks complex-looking chart) *Super Street Fighter 2X Revival Edition.*

VISUAL PINBALL TABLE OF THE MONTH

Chased by ghosts through a maze in a pill-poppin daze

One of the lesser-known coin-operated outings for the little round yellow fella (and the moral-restoring thematic link between Ms Pac-Man and Baby Pac-Man), Bally's 1982 table managed to pull off the tricky task of retaining our hero's maze-munching antics on a pinball machine. Pac-movement was controlled by using one flipper to set your direction and the other one to move, while a little 'ghost' light chased you around a light 'maze' in the centre of the playfield. It was even possible to collect 'power pills' in the pinball section of the game with which you could turn the tables on your spooky adversary. One of the greatest pins of its era, with particularly excellent sound, it's been converted to run pretty much perfectly through Visual Pinball/PinMAME, and it's well worth the trifling 1Mb or so download from www.hippie.net/shivasite/vptables/.



Make something this good, then send it to us.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

....end the ritual before it begins....





Things are never quite as they first appear! A simple case of murder turns out to be part of a sacred ritual, only now being completed... 1000 years after it began!

As the 'unsuspecting hero' & rookie Scotland Yard Detective, Brent Halligan, it's up to you to solve a series of disturbing murders. Assisted by a young female Anthropologist, you become entailed in a web of murder, forgotten secrets and world threatening desires. From the distant past to the modern day, the question is whether you can find the key to unlock this mystery?



- More than 50 impressive locations from the past & present
- More than 360 interactive scenes
- 3D Characters (up to 1.000 polygons)
- Hi-resolution 2D/3D graphics including UK locations
- More than 20 speaking characters
- Realistic lip synch dialogues
- 5 hours of voice-overs
- Non linear dialogues and game play
- Extensive real time soundtrack
- SFX in Dolby Surround Sound

'THE BEST SERIOUS ADVENTURE GAME IN YEARS' PCZONE

'MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS HAS A SATISFYINGLY EPIC STORYLINE' GamesDomain

'WELL-WRITTEN AND CLEVER, IT TRULY EVOKES THE GOOD OL' DAYS OF ADVENTURE GAMING WHEN QUALITY WAS THE NORM' Just Adventure

HOUSE OF TALES

CDV Software, 337 Lee Valley Technopark, Ashley Road, London, N17 9LN Tel: 0208 880 4144

www.mysteryofthedruids.com - www.cdv.de

cdv

SHORTS

CONDITION ZERO SHIFTS GEAR

The troubled history of the debut single-player *Counter-Strike* outing *Condition Zero* has taken yet another twist, with the announcement that Valve has farmed the product out to long-time bedfellows Gearbox, the team responsible for *Half-Life: Blue Shift*. *Gearbox* claims to have started the game from scratch, despite the fact that it has been worked on extensively by both Rogue Entertainment and Valve itself. Regardless of this claim, all of the elements mentioned in our Top Story (Zone #105) appear to have been retained. We'll bring you a full update in the near future.



TREND KILLER

Polish developer Lemon Interactive has announced a new FPS entitled *Painkiller* and released some early teaser artwork. Previously concentrating on publishing and distribution, this is one of Lemon's first in-house projects, and promises an old-skool approach with an intense action focus. Lemon is selling the game on the fact that trends such as stealth, simulation and teamwork have been eschewed in favour of 'domination and mayhem with hundreds of evil monsters'. Sounds not unlike *Serious Sam* then, but we'll let you know when more details emerge.



The Hitman and hair



The bald-as-a-coot hero returns in *Hitman 2*

Last year's ground-breaking stealth 'em up *Hitman* was and still is an excellent and original game, still widely played despite its age. Rough around the edges and a tad tedious in the jungle missions, many nonetheless claim it's better than *Max Payne*. Certainly it's a close run competition between the two.

Pretty much a case of more of the same, *Hitman 2* is set to re-acquaint us with the lonely life of the assassin, with a much updated 3D engine offering even better character animation and a choice between first and third-perspective modes. Thankfully, the non-linear mission structure of the original will be retained, though there will be a slight shift away from purely gun-based assassination. As well as putting holes in your targets, you'll be able to poison them, electrocute them, perhaps even trip them up on a bar of soap, make them rattle down the street on a roller skate, where they'll end up plunging through panes of glass, giant cream cakes and finally into the suffocating bosom of a matronly lady in her middle years.

Rewarding players for well executed kills, the game will offer plenty of new weapons – even virtual play areas for you to test out your new kit between each level. We wouldn't be surprised either, if developer IO has a stab at incorporating some sort of Bullet-Time mode, à la *Max Payne*. It did, after all, have slow motion in the original *Hitman* well before Remedy came out with it.

Curiously there are no plans to include any multiplayer modes, but then considering the prospect of having 16 would-be assassins camping behind flowerpots and inside cupboards, it wouldn't be very interesting anyway.

IO Interactive • 2002 • www.ioi.dk



What a lovely spot for a cold-blooded assassin.



No work for a hitman in a deserted city.



Look at that shrub.



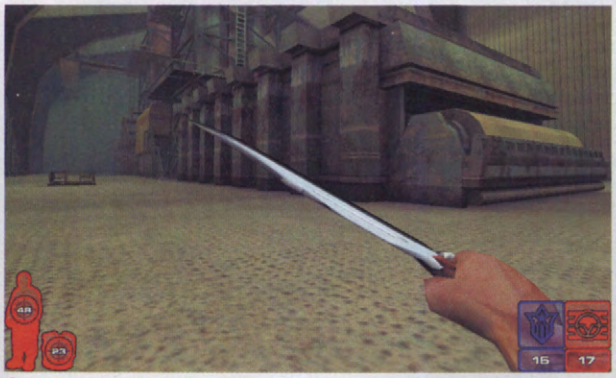
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Looks like the shadows need a bit of work.



How's about you drive and I'll shoot?



That's some pig-sticker he's got there.



Rage's entry into the FPS genre is great news for action fans.

Rage rides shotgun

Mobile Forces weds FPS combat with vehicular action

If there's one thing you can be sure of in this life, it's that Liverpool-based Rage Software will always create a good-looking game. From *Darklight Conflict* to more recent titles such as *eRacer* and *Hostile Waters*, Rage has consistently pushed graphics cards to the limits, even if in some cases (*Offroad*), gameplay has been wanting.

On show at ECTS was *Mobile Forces*, Rage's first FPS and one that is sure to appeal to fans of open-terrain real-world action games such as the forthcoming *Ghost Recon* and *Halo*. Set in the vague near future, *Mobile Forces* is notable in that as well as a full arsenal of contemporary weapons, from M-16 lookalikes to sniper rifles, players will also be able to drive a fleet of vehicles, or indeed jump in the back of someone else's and use hard-mounted weapons to dispatch the foe.

While the combination of FPSing and vehicular antics is something of a trend at the moment, Rage should be able to use its experience in a wide range of genres to pull it off credibly. They're already touting advanced vehicle physics and accurately modelled gears, brakes and suspension, indicating that this will be much more than a token inclusion of floaty tanks and APCs to the shooter formula.

As its seeminly the case with every new FPS at the moment, *Mobile Forces* will use the new Unreal Warfare engine, and promises 12 massive single-player environments and a full complement of multiplayer options. Aside from traditional deathmatch, we are promised bomb defusing missions and several variations to take advantage of the vehicular combat. Could be a real hoot then.

Rage Software • Spring 2002 • www.rage.co.uk

SHORTS

SCARIEST GAME EVER?

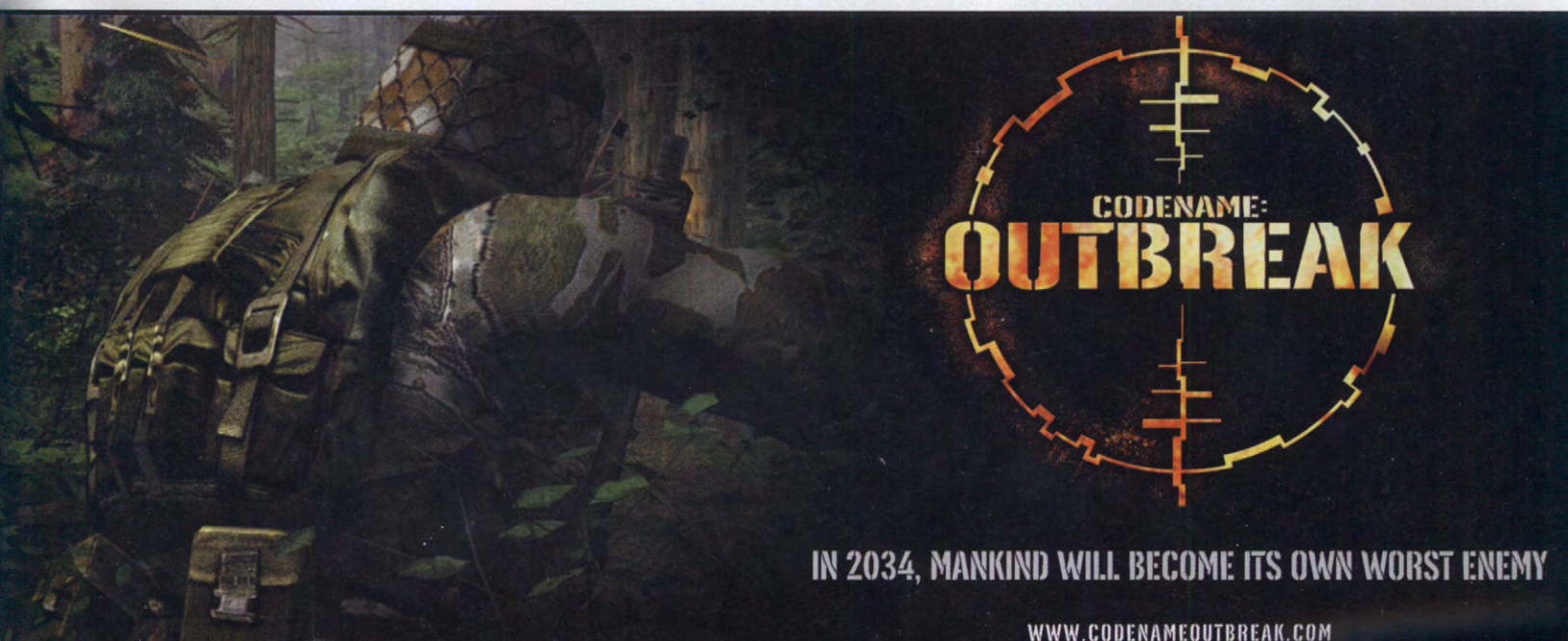
Considering the rich heritage and natural gaming environments of the dark side, it's surprising how few games are built around a foundation of horror. *Resident Evil* is the best of the bunch but Czech-based Zima Software reckons it can do better. *Bloodline* is a 3D action/adventure and Zima describes it as full of face-to-face action, with puzzles, 40 types of enemy, loads of different weapons, a proprietary 3D engine, but most of all "FEAR, which pulls you down into a whirl of events and does not release you before sunlight dries the blood on yours arms." Easy, boys.



DEADLY DOZEN

Infogrames have announced a new first/third person WWII-era shooter to be developed by nFusion Interactive – *Deadly Dozen*. The game looks set to follow such distinguished shooters as *Hidden & Dangerous* and *Rainbow Six*, with squad-based action played across 10 missions in settings such as Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. Authentic weapons, such as the M1 and Thompson make appearances, as well as German weapons that you can pick up along the way. Though the graphics are comparable with contemporary shooters, the game is to be aimed at a budget release to compete with more established franchises.





SHORTS

EXPANSION WARS



Another title we had a quick hands-on brush with at ECTS was *The Age Of Enlightenment*, GSC Gameworld's forthcoming expansion pack to their excellent real-time strategy game *Cossacks: European Wars*. Adding to the already massive scale of the original, the add-on will feature new maps up to four times the size of the existing ones, five new historical campaigns, a bunch of new units and two new nations – the lederhosen-clad Bavarians and bacon-scoffing Danes. With no graphical enhancements to speak of, it's mostly a case of more rather than better, but as routine expansions go this seems fairly generous.

GLIMPSE OF X2



Egosoft has announced the sequel to *X – Beyond The Frontier* as *X2: The Khaak Threat* (not the greatest name, granted). Having chatted with big cheese Bernd Nehahn at ECTS and taken a look at early footage of the game, we can report that the same core gameplay of space combat and trading on an epic scale is in place, with the storyline following on directly from the expansion pack. The ships are now much bigger and more detailed, and though multiplayer is being saved for *X Online*, the game is already looking superb. Serious *X* fan Richie is on the case and will bring us a full report next issue.

SEA DOGGED



Sea Dogs, the pirate adventure game we reviewed back in March (*PCZ* #100, 70 per cent), is finally getting a UK release courtesy of Eon Digital Entertainment and is due to hit the shelves in November. Considering that Akella is well into development of the sequel and the game hasn't been updated since April, it seems odd that we'll have to wait until then.



There's already an old console game called *Iron Storm*, so expect a name change before release.



A third-person option is becoming a standard FPS feature.



Reflections on weapons are a touch of class.

Storm warning

The French rewrite history with war-torn FPS *Iron Storm*

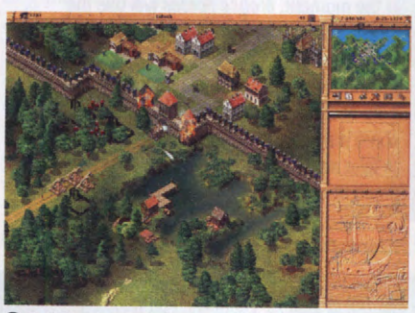
If the realities of 20th-century history aren't sickening enough for you, you're going to love this new game from the folks at French outfit 4X Studio, as it's set in an imaginary 1963 where the First World War never ended.

Joining the increasingly swollen ranks of similarly pitched titles, it's a first-person shooter hoping to blend good fun times with the gritty realities of guts-out, mustard-gas-in-the-face warfare. The plot puts you as part of a rebel group out to overthrow the evil capitalist consortium who are perpetuating the war for their own filthy profit-mongering ends, and your mission, obviously, is to kill the depraved fat cats and restore peace to the world.

Given the alternate history setting, authentic elements from World War I such as trenches, zeppelins and bi-planes will co-exist with more modern gadgetry such as laser mines and sub-machine guns, as well as stuff that's just plain made up, like the grenade dogs that hop into enemy tanks and blow everyone to bits.

We had a brief play of the game at ECTS, and were pleasantly surprised by the updated Phoenix 3D engine powering the lot. The excellent real-time lighting and textures were both competitive with the big-name engines, and the sniper-fuelled atmosphere had an uncommon intensity and conviction. The only problem for the game, and admittedly it's not a small one, will be competing with the likes of *Medal Of Honor*.

4X Studio • April 2002 • www.4xtechnologies.com



Building town defences will be a must.



All historical elements are carefully researched.



It has weather effects and everything.

War of Patrician

Piracy, diplomacy and shopping for turnips in *Patrician II: Quest For Power*

Historically accurate real-time trading games from Germany may not be the most electrifying genre around, but this one is pretty enough to pique our interest, as well as having the potential to be a substantial multiplayer hit. Sequel to a long-forgotten first outing, *Patrician II* blends elements of economic wrangling, political strategy and swashbuckling action in a rigorously detailed rendering of 14th-century Europe.

Starting out as a lowly trader with nothing but your wits to guide you, the aim of the game is to trade, and if necessary, kill, rob and deceive your way to fame and fortune, with the ultimate objective of becoming the head of the European trading league. Amassing a fleet of swift boats will be a must to shuffle the game's 20 tradable goods from port to port, and frequent charitable works and palm-greasing will bolster your popularity on shore. Turning to piracy is an option, with real-time ship battles incorporating boarding parties and a variety of weapons, but you run the risk of being tossed in the slammer if found out.

Unfortunately, the German version of *Patrician II* (which was released some months ago) offered only LAN-based multiplay, an oversight we're hoping will be rectified in time for the UK release. The developer has already announced an add-on pack for the game, so the problem should at least be addressed in that. Expect a full review in the next issue of *PC ZONE*, and in the meantime try out the demo on our coverdiscs.

Infogrames • Spring 2002 • www.infogrames.co.uk

WAITING TO HAPPEN

Dave Woods goes to the cinema, comes out and claims someone else's idea for his own. As usual.

BATTLE ROYALE

Some ideas in Waiting To Happen are destined for the dustbin. Others are destined to make people rich, although, if anyone ever nicks the ideas printed on these pages we'll sue. Perhaps not in this case though. because it might be said that I haven't come up with this concept off my own back. And, if pressed I might actually admit that the inspiration for this fantastic new online game came to me after an early preview screening of one of the best films of the year, *Battle Royale*.

You might have seen it by now, as it was due for release on September 14, although if the tabloid hacks have managed to get a sniff of it before release I wouldn't be surprised if the government hasn't already stepped in, denouncing it as sick filth (without actually having seen it), before burning every print in the UK and publicly castrating anyone involved in its conception.

If you haven't seen the film this is the idea for the game: *Counter-Strike* introduced the concept of games with consequences. The only problem is the worst that can happen (presuming you're not unlucky enough to be stabbed to death in real life by some crack-addled maniac who's been playing the game non-stop for 36 hours and has just taken offence at some minor in-game infraction) is that you have to sit on your arse for three minutes cursing while a few fat Americans rush around the map exchanging obese pleasantries. In *Battle Royale* you only get one stab at greatness. You pay £30 for the game, which also acts as your entrance fee into the one-off year-long online tournament. Each battle consists of 30 people and takes place on a virtual island which is split into different sectors. Each round lasts for three hours and plays like a first-person shooter, albeit one with photo-realistic terrain and where your character is an accurate representation of your real-life persona. This obviously throws up even more conundrums – could you kill one of the assorted gorgeous Japanese ladies from the original film? Or would you prefer to befriend them and talk them into joining a suicide pact off a cliff faces?

> **"I wouldn't be surprised if the government hasn't already stepped in, denouncing it as sick filth before burning every print"**

At kick-off everyone is given a random weapon, from the mildly useful (an automatic weapon, or a scanner which shows where everyone else is on the island) to the what-in-the-blue-hell-is-this (the saucepan lid or the loud hailer)? Because you only get one crack at the game you can't quit out and start again, you just have to make do with what you've got. Spend too long moaning about it at the start and you'll end up with a knife between the eyes.

After the three hours is up, the one remaining competitor is crowned the winner and moves onto the next tier. If there's more than one person left alive everyone is eliminated – this stops groups of friends sitting tight once they've killed everyone else, or campers from bedding down in a hiding place. To further ensure that arch-campers like Korda don't hunt down a hole in the ground, sit in it and cover themselves with bracken, after every ten minutes a sector in the map is declared a danger zone. If you're not out of this zone in five minutes you die.

To make things even more interesting you're actively encouraged to join up in teams of friends, which obviously gives you an advantage over the assorted freaks and loners on a one-man killing spree. Unfortunately, you can't win as a group, so once you've slaughtered everyone else you'll have to turn on each other, or run the risk of everyone getting eliminated.

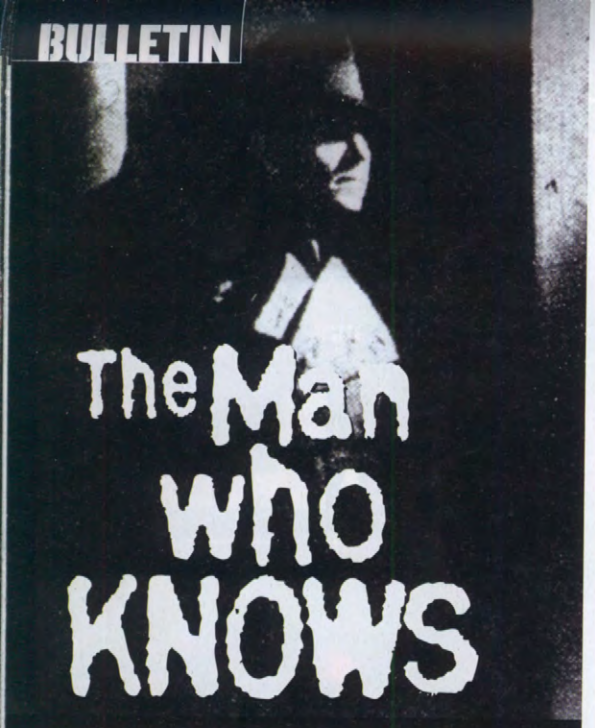
If you win you move up to the next tier, until you reach the *Battle Royale* final, where things get a little tasty. In order to ensure you know your competitors, you have to spend a minimum of 24 hours in a 3D chat room where bonds are forged and enemies made. Once you've split into your various factions you're released onto the final island where the grisly spectacle of organised mutilation goes round again until the final person is crowned the winner. If it's you, you get a huge sum of money and the prestige of winning the most gruelling games tournament in the history of the Internet. You also get the opportunity to preside over next year's tournament, announcing the deaths over the air as they happen and deciding which players to screw by making their sectors danger zones. If you lose you have to bite the bullet and wait for next year's release, which is allegedly going to feature enhanced graphics and a few jump-pads. PCZ











IT'LL WARP YOUR MIND

Boffins in **Japan** have concluded that videogames irreparably stunt the mind of the young, causing children to devolve into vicious slavering beasts with only basic motor neurone functions. According to the study, the civilised world is on the verge of breakdown and the future will see a feral society populated by wild savages with limited intelligence, appalling memory and negligible social skills. In the wholly infallible experiment, the **eggheads** proved beyond reasonable doubt that playing a game caused a paucity of activity in the **frontal lobe** in comparison to performing basic arithmetic. It is this lack of stimulation that causes the gamer to mutate into an uncontrollable monster, a victim of the mind-poison pushed by unscrupulous publishers prepared to destroy the brains of children in return for hard cash.

Professor Ryuta Kawashima of **Tohoku University** screamed: "The importance of this discovery cannot be underestimated and the implications are very serious." Frothing at the mouth with impotent rage, he howled: "There is a problem we will have with a new generation of children – who play computer games – that we have never seen before. The implications are very serious for an increasingly violent society, and these students will be doing more and more bad things if they are playing games and not doing other things like reading aloud or learning arithmetic."

ELSPA director general, **Roger Bennett**, felt obliged to defend the industry, and issued a broadside at the meddling academics, branding them grossly irresponsible charlatans. The fuming games apologist spat: "If you look beyond the sensational headlines, it is immediately clear that this new study proves no such thing. One of the less-emphasised findings was that subsequent studies have also made the same 'discovery' about listening to music. Unsurprisingly, there were no headlines in yesterday's newspapers claiming that **Westlife** are rotting the brains of a generation!" Punching the wall in disgust and weeping tears of fury, Bennett roared: "The result of this study is actually not that computer games damage the brain but that half an hour of playing this one particular title was less effective at developing the brain than doing half an hour of repetitive arithmetic."

In other news, **Eidos Interactive** has been found not guilty of the murder of **13** people. The **UK** publisher was discharged from the **$5 billion** lawsuit lodged against it by families of America's **Columbine High School** massacre. The lawsuit claimed that videogames caused the shooting by making violence pleasurable and disconnected from reality, and charges were brought against a host of companies, including **AOL Time Warner**, **Paramount**, **Sega** and **Sony**. However, because it was discovered that teenage murderers **Eric Harris** and **Dylan Klebold** owned a copy of the (apparently) gun-free *Final Fantasy VII* at the time of the shooting, Eidos is now in the clear, with **Colorado**'s chief judge ordering that the complaint against it be dismissed without prejudice.

Stick that up your frontal lobe.

MISSING IN ACTION

These games are MIA. We make like Chuck Norris and track them down

HOMEWORLD 2

Rumours are zinging around the globe about the follow-up to Relic's smash strategy title. First Sierra flash a page up on the Internet proclaiming a countdown to *Homeworld 2*, set to culminate at E3. E3 comes and the page disappears. Then rumours start about it being cancelled and Relic being released from its contract with Sierra, which Sierra deny categorically, while stating that it is in 'negotiations' with Relic. Who knows. It's not coming home in a body bag yet, but expect it to be a while before we hear anything concrete.

Relic • ETA 2002 • http://sierrastudios.com



Not a single screenshot has been seen of *Homeworld 2*.

SHADOWS OF REALITY

It's with very deep regret that we announce the passing of Nevolution's first-person RPG *Shadows Of Reality*. Covered in this very magazine back in issue 97, we reported that the game, originally planned as a massively multiplayer online affair, had scaled back to single-player to woo publishers. It didn't work because, citing unsustainable personal losses, the game has been consigned to the dustbin. Nevolution's Steve Adkins says the project may be revived when "the game industry is a little more favourable to original ideas and not sequels."

Nevolution • KIA • www.nevolution.net



Killed In Action, though with a slim chance of eventual resurrection.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

The most eagerly awaited game in FPS history is fast becoming the most delayed title since Romero's *Daikatana*, not that we're suggesting the game is going to be complete pony when it's released. In fact, from what we've seen of it so far, it's looking like it could be the gaming antidote to sequel-itis, although the official word is that it's been delayed again. Hopes of a Christmas release have been dashed by the developers who still insist on giving nothing away unless they feel like it. "Sometime in 2002" is the last we heard.

3DRealms • ETA 2002 • www.3drealms.com



Another six months of waiting for the new *Duke*.

LAST NINJA - RETURN TO LIN FEN ISLAND

Few game theme tunes are likely to bring a tear to the eye of our news editor as quickly as the classic Commodore 64 outing *The Last Ninja*. We originally uncovered the all-action third-person 3D sequel to this classic series 11 issues ago, and since then not much has been heard of the game. We recently had a chat with the folks at Studio 3, who include several of the original C64 team, and they revealed that the game has been completely overhauled, with a stunning new 3D engine. We'll bring you more on the game soon.

Studio 3 • ETA 2002 • www.studio3.co.uk



The developers reckon this will be bigger than *Metal Gear Solid 2*.



OK, so it looks a bit dodgy, but the source material has ample charm to counter this.



The developers have chosen not to follow the plot of the books.



Don't panic – these are only the very first screenshots.

Mostly Harmless

First in-game shots of *Hitchhiker's Guide* revealed

Phase 3 Studios was showing off some early code and the first batch of in-game screenshots for the upcoming PC adaptation of Douglas Adams's *Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy* at ECTS. The London-based developers have taken a gamble in choosing to detour fairly significantly from the books themselves, opting only to use the general *Hitchhiker's* universe and central characters such as Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and Slartibardfast.

Looking like a fairly standard 3D action-adventure, we're told there will be more emphasis on action than was originally envisaged (another gamble considering the success of the text-based *Hitchhiker's* incarnations). Obviously, you will assume the role of the hapless Arthur Dent, coping with obstacles such as the destruction of Earth, the need to thwart the invasion plans of the evil Krikkit robots and where to get a decent cup of tea.

Along the way you'll be aided by the likes of Marvin the Paranoid Android and Zaphod Beeblebrox. The game also features kung-fu towelin' monks and some rather nice animations from the planet of the mattresses. Adams's untimely death earlier this year has obviously cast something of a cloud over the project, but the team are convinced that the game will be a worthy tribute to his work and the *Hitchhiker's* fanbase.

Phase 3 • ETA TBC • www.phase3studios.com

Serial Sam

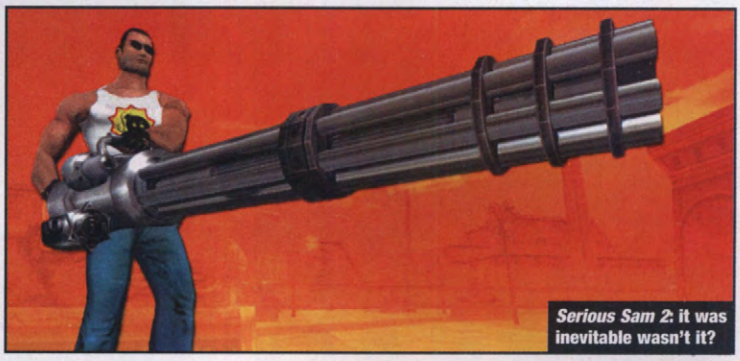
Croteam is back with the second serious shooter

Serious Sam really endeared himself to us in his first outing. He might not have set the gaming world alight with his no-brainer style of first-person shooting, but the sublime 3D engine, humour and back-to-the-old-skool action had a charm all of its very own. So, when Croteam announced it was developing a full-blown sequel to *Serious Sam* with an enhanced engine, we were mightily pleased. And, when it announced there wouldn't be any Egyptian influences this time around, we were positively thrilled.

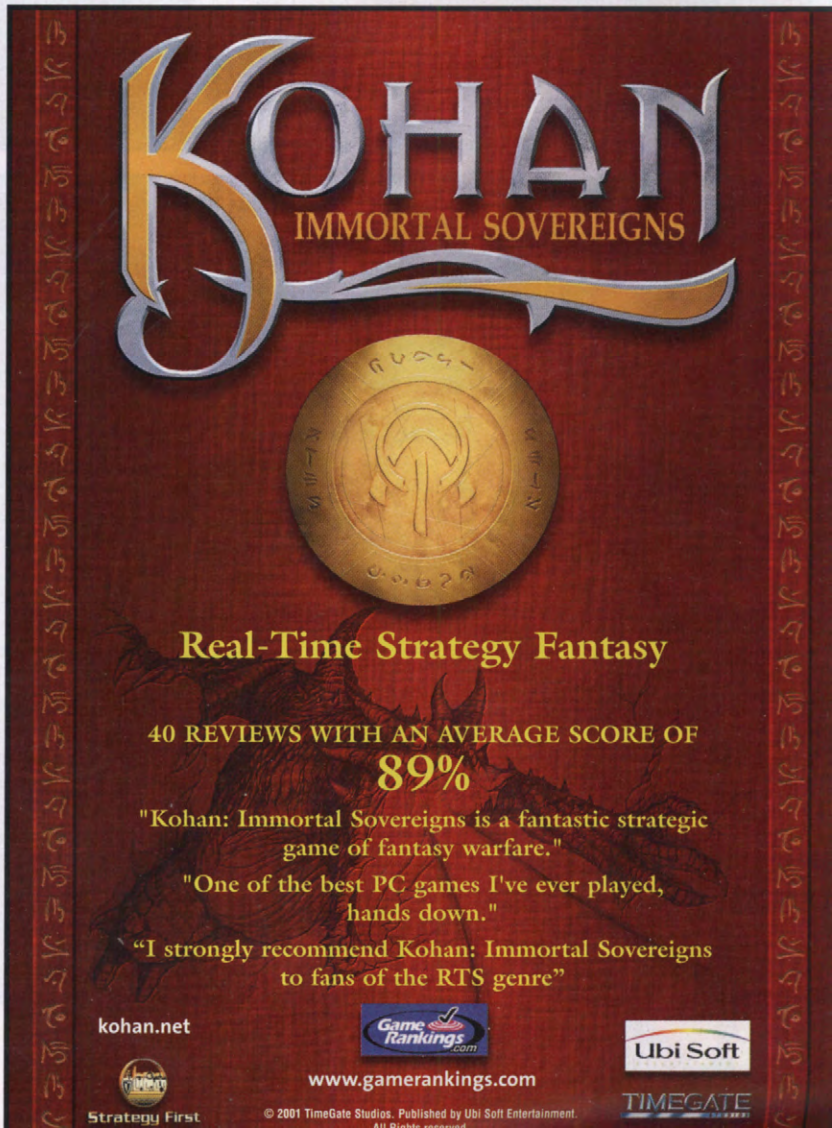
You can also look forward to new weapons (although we hope they keep some of the best ones from the original), new monsters (likewise) and possibly even a skeletal animation system as long as they can code it in a way that doesn't interfere with the *Serious* trademark – hundreds of creatures on screen at any one time.

These are the only firm details we have at present, although we're hoping that *Serious Sam 2* screenshots will be released in time for next issue. In the meantime, we can exclusively speculate that the game is going to be released at a low-price point, possibly £19.99. Then again…

Croteam • ETA TBC • www.croteam.com



***Serious Sam 2*: it was inevitable wasn't it?**





HOTSHOTS

AvP 2

We just got our asses kicked...

It's getting closer. And we're getting scared. In fact, when the PR blokey turned up with the preview code for the sequel to the scariest shooter Shoemaker's ever played, we begged him not to install it on our hard drives. But would he listen? We then had to subject ourselves to actually playing the game and then had to compose ourselves sufficiently to pen these modest words.

As you can see for yourself the game is already looking stunning and the constant tweaks being made to the code are tightening play up and improving the visuals. With the pedigree of Monolith and its spanking new LithTech 2.5 engine running things behind the scenes we're confident it's going to be one of the most solid and best-looking shooters on the block when it's finally released (although you might need a pretty hefty PC to coax the framerate up).

The Internet is currently encouraging rumours that the game could hit the shelves as early as October but we're expecting it to arrive on a sled around 25 shopping days before Christmas. In the meantime, we suggest you settle back with our hands-free spread of exclusive screenshots from the game. Nice eh?



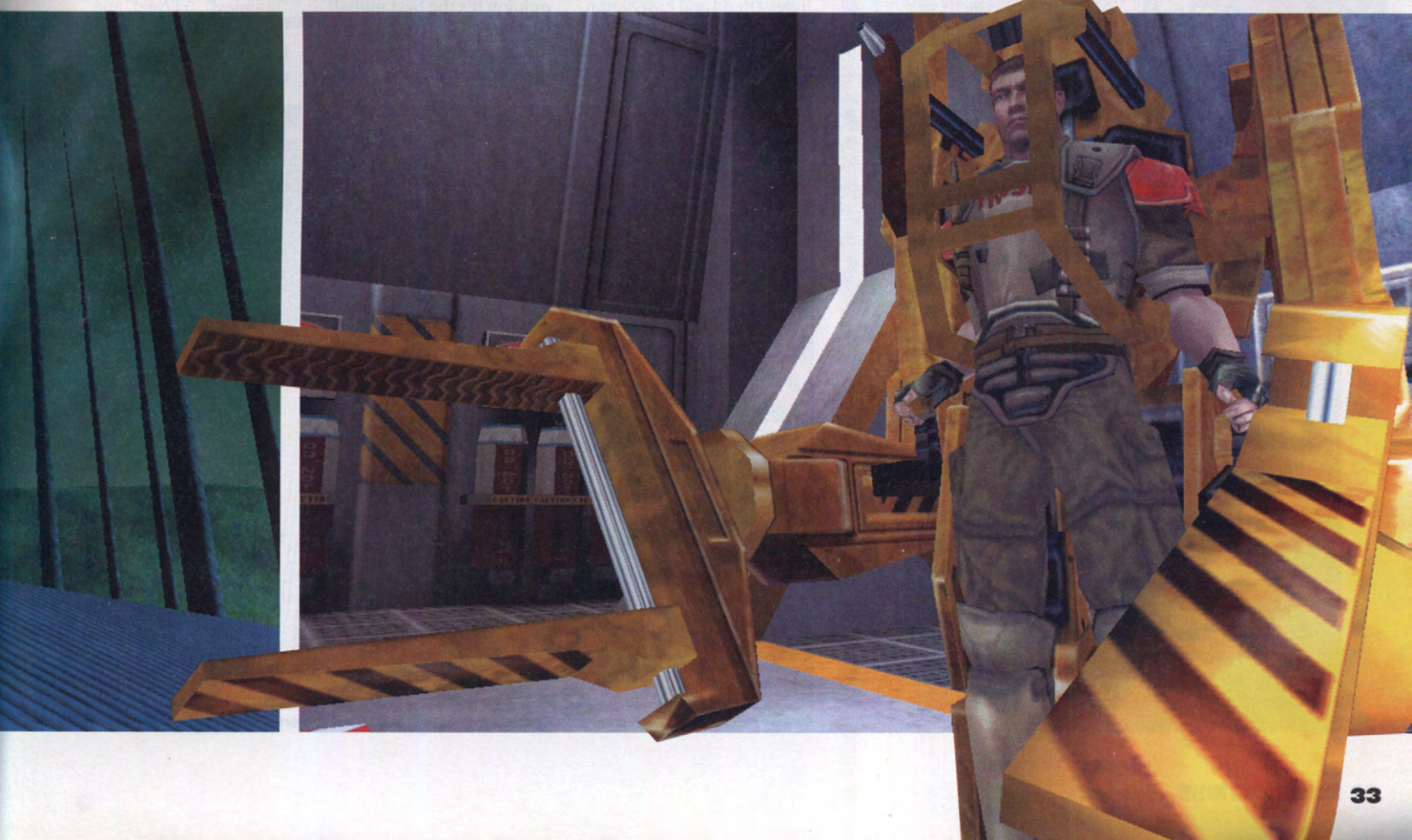
Monolith • ETA December • www.avpnews.com








092
076



MAILBOX



Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON



***PC ZONE* is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're priced at £49.99 each and are worth every single penny.**

RABBIT, RABBIT, RABBIT

A couple of things prompted me to write. Firstly, and more seriously, in your preview of *IL-2 Sturmovik*, you showed a sensitivity towards a veteran's comments that I wouldn't have expected from you. I don't mean that in a critical sense, but your job is not to preach on the perils of war but on the merits of games. Still, while games are being developed about sensitive periods in history the issues are usually avoided or parodied, and it was good to see some attempt to tackle the issue.

Secondly, in your preview of *Conquest: Frontier Wars* you say, "no visionary has ever pictured [rabbits] flying starships." Except the greatest visionary of all, Nintendo, in *Lylat Wars* for the N64. Keep up the excellent work.

Tom Berryman

I HAVE A DREAM #1

This is an open letter to the games industry. Thank you for *Galaga*. Thank you for *Sun Tzu – Art of War*. Thank you for *Red Alert*, *Sim City 2000*, *Masters Of Orion*, *Action Quake II*, *Ultima Online* and *Deus Ex*. Thank you.

Now please move on. Stop dictating to me. Stop making games that I've already played. Stop writing plots I've already seen or heard or role-played. Stop obsessing over polygons and frames per second and lighting effects and destructible terrain. Move on. Please.

Make me empty worlds, desolate universes. Make me vast, clean digital spaces where I can play, where I can create, where I can make my dreams happen. Not yours. You have this incredible power and yet all you do with it is replicate the same tired themes, the same linear concepts, the same...

I'm bored. I'm sick of being led. I want to lead. I'm sick of your plots. I want my own. I want to make, create, tear down and rebuild. I don't want to follow your footsteps. I want a clear desert and when I make my footprints in the sand, I want to look back and nod and point and say: "See that path? I laid it down."

Az

You forgot: thank you for *Chuckie Egg*.

DEAF, DUMB AND BLIND

I have enjoyed reading your magazine on and off for a while. I bought the September issue for the *Arcanum* review, as I am particularly keen on adventure/RPG games such as *Fallout*, *System Shock* and *Planescape: Torment*. I was therefore surprised to find that you covered my other gaming love: pinball. PC games such as *Slam Tilt* and *Big Race USA* got me interested in the real thing and I now have full-sized Judge Dredd and Last Action Hero tables. Unfortunately, my interest coincided with the demise of Williams and Bally and when most pubs and arcades made the tragic decision to pull out of pinball. The result is that I have yet to find White Water or Theatre Of Magic tables, which I would love to try. I was dead chuffed to read your 'Back From The Dead' article on emulators and the news of the visual pinball site made my day. I look forward to your VP updates and hope that your article will help pinball survive. I have always wanted to go away and design a table myself. Cheers.

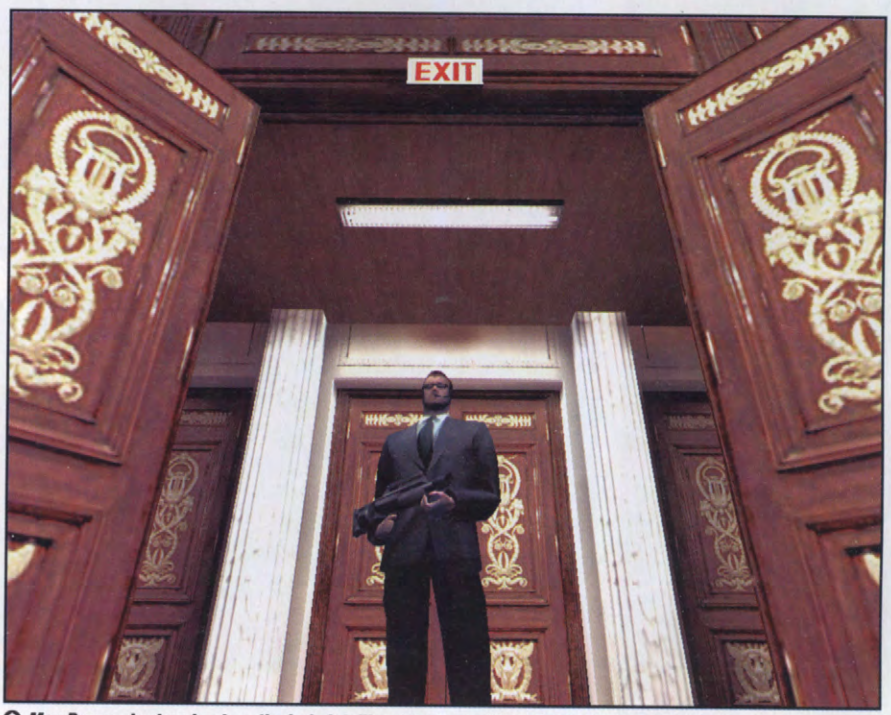
Eddie



Check out our regular Emulation Zone on page 24 for this month's table of the month. And try to find White Water – in my humble opinion it's the best pinball table in existence. Oh, and when you've designed your table, send it in and we'll stick it on the cover disc.

NIGHTMARE

I'm assuming the real *PC ZONE* issue 107 will drop through my letter box any day now, or I'll wake up shortly and find it's all been a bad messy dream. Has the coveted title of Classic really fallen into such misuse? Has Richie Shoemaker started adding from 50 for his reviews instead of zero? It must be blindingly obvious to anyone with *Max Payne* what I'm talking about here. Just run through those uppers and downers again and ask yourselves whether this game is worthy of an Excellence award, let alone Classic status. It's an insult to its peers in the genre. As you say yourselves, it's "brainless", "clichéd" and "too short". Mmm, sounds like a worthy 90 per cent to me. The makers of



***Max Payne*: short and not particularly intelligent, but we still think it's worthy of a Classic rating.**



The Internet: get your jollies for nothing and your games for free.

Technomage must be wishing Oliver Cross had taken some of whatever Richie had had.

Ashley Holloway

Richie says: "You obviously have a problem with the statement 'a triumph of style over substance, looks above intelligence,' but what's wrong with a game that's better looking than it is intelligent? (Take Donna Air, for example.) The experience of *Max Payne* is fantastic, and the innovations are enough to make it worthy of a Classic.

"As you say yourselves, it's 'brainless', 'clichéd' and 'too short'. Mmm, sounds like a worthy 90 per cent to me"

ASHLEY HOLLOWAY REVIEWS RICHIE'S REVIEW OF *MAX PAYNE*

FREE LUNCH #1

I was reading the letter by Will Stevens in *PCZ* #107 about how there are so few free games over the Internet. Poppycock! (*Language! – Ed*). I am actively involved in a community that makes free, original games that can be downloaded off the Internet. OK, so some are utterly shit, in fact, the majority are utterly shit, but there are a few gems that stand out, and you could say the same pattern is replicated in the commercial world – take *Army Men 2*, *Gilbert Goodmate*, and God help us, *Erotica Island*. You should check out some of the free stuff that's out there. The Daily Click (www.dailyclick.cjb.net) is a good starting point, along with Virtually Real (www.vrealware.com). Fallen Angel (www.faind.com) is worth a look; O_software (www.o3software.com) and Cellosoft (www.cellosoft.com) are also useful. Not all of it is brilliant, but it's free and if you look hard enough you're bound to find something that tickles your fancy.

The Canaryman

FREE LUNCH #2

I've never felt the need to write to a magazine before, but after reading Will Steven's comments, I couldn't let it go. I have recently started to become a shareware author and although I agree there is a need for the return of the public domain, I would like to make a few points.

Game development, whether professional or otherwise costs money. I will freely admit that the costs to myself are no more than a few hundred pounds, but it is nonetheless a cost. At the moment, I have only released one shareware game and I plan to release more in the future. I don't expect these games to make me rich, yet I do like seeing some return on my hard work.

A lot of people think that these games are simple and have no right to compete with larger projects released commercially. What people don't tend to notice is the fact that these shareware games are usually written by small part-time developers (of which some are students), that use their talents to bring in a small extra income.

Nobody is forcing anyone to purchase these games but if you really do wish to continue, you'll find most come with extra features (new levels etc.) which expand your enjoyment of said game for as little as £5. In regards to the public domain front, from what I remember of the Amiga scene, many so-called games released into the public domain were trial versions and asked people to pay for extra levels/challenges if they wanted them...

Oh, and a final thought. I have also made a few freeware games across systems and have had many people saying that they would be willing to pay for more levels from them for a small price. Thanks.

Philip Lutas

Have a look around, try something for free, and if you like it show your gratitude by registering it and paying a small amount of money. Seems fair to me.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

FUTURE SHOCK

GOODIES WINNER!

This letter is a response to Steve Hill's article regarding the Columbine lawsuit, in which he bemoans the fact that the mainstream American public blame computer games for the deaths of their schoolchildren in shootings caused by (allegedly) drug-addled, hallucinating, games-crazed fellow school kids with Really Big Guns.

I don't like the lawsuit either. Though the grief of the parents who lost their kids is real and can be justified, their desire to blame 'outside influences' will help no one, least of all themselves. In this part I agree with Hill's assertion that having parents just blaming computer games is wrong.

When was the last time you saw a really, really mature game – you know, with moral conundrums, deep philosophical thinking, judicious use of sex and violence and mature thought? The latest was *Azrael's Tear* as far as I can remember. Games either fall in the 'toy' category (*SimCity* or *Myst*) or are vicarious power fantasies (*QIII*, *UT*, *Deus Ex* ad nauseam), or a little bit of both.

I like games like that – I'm as much a fan of *Counter-Strike* as the next guy, and *The Sims* has held my attention for a long time. But I love computer games above all, and seeing the medium in which I have spent so many years being degraded and belittled as 'just for kids' and 'pornographically violent crap with no artistic or societal value' hurts.

We potentially have the ability to take on older forms of art – 'high' art, music and literature – and wipe the floor with them. But what really happens? Look at your magazine. Computer games are limited in view, scope and variety (where are the openly gay games designers? Why aren't there more women in games? Or people who aren't white, and proud of it? Or Muslims and Jews?)

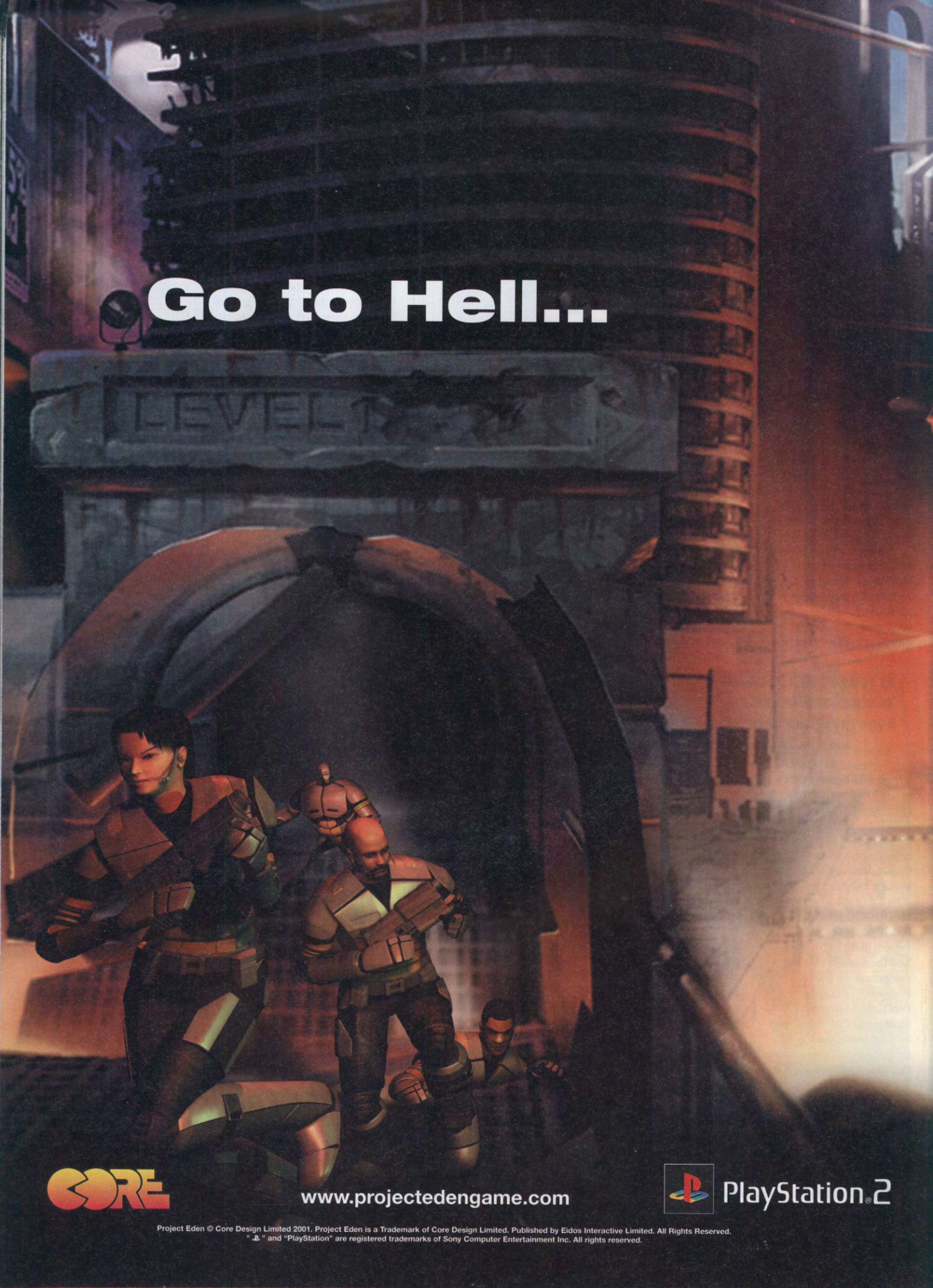
I'll tell you this. Computer games are in a bubble – similar to the comic book bubble back in the '80s, when people were just crazy about comics. The popularity of computer games is based on hype, and there are cracks within the industry that within time will cause the industry to implode most messily, unless long-term measures are taken. Unless computer games designers decide to widen their vision, their scope and their market, people may leave in droves for something more entertaining, more new.

Tariq Ali



Good points, well made. Developers take note.





CORE

www.projectedengame.com

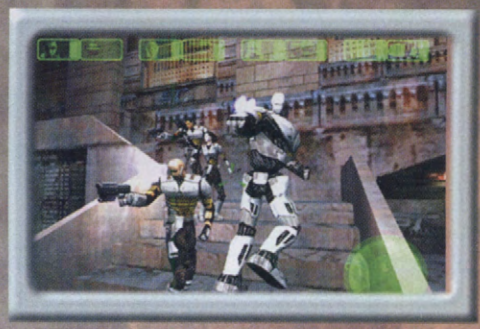
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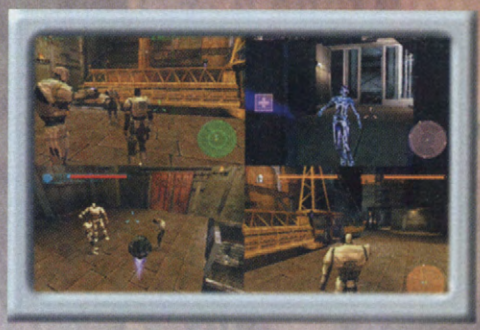
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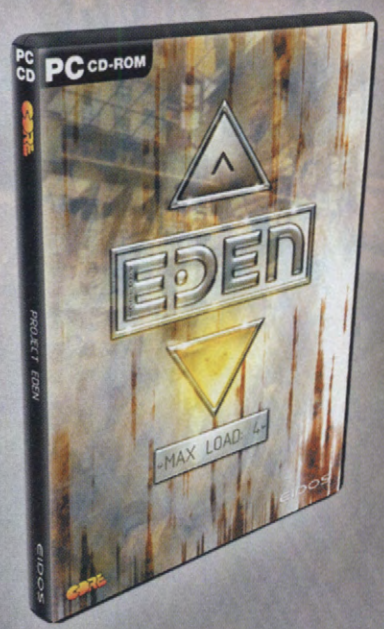
...Come to Eden











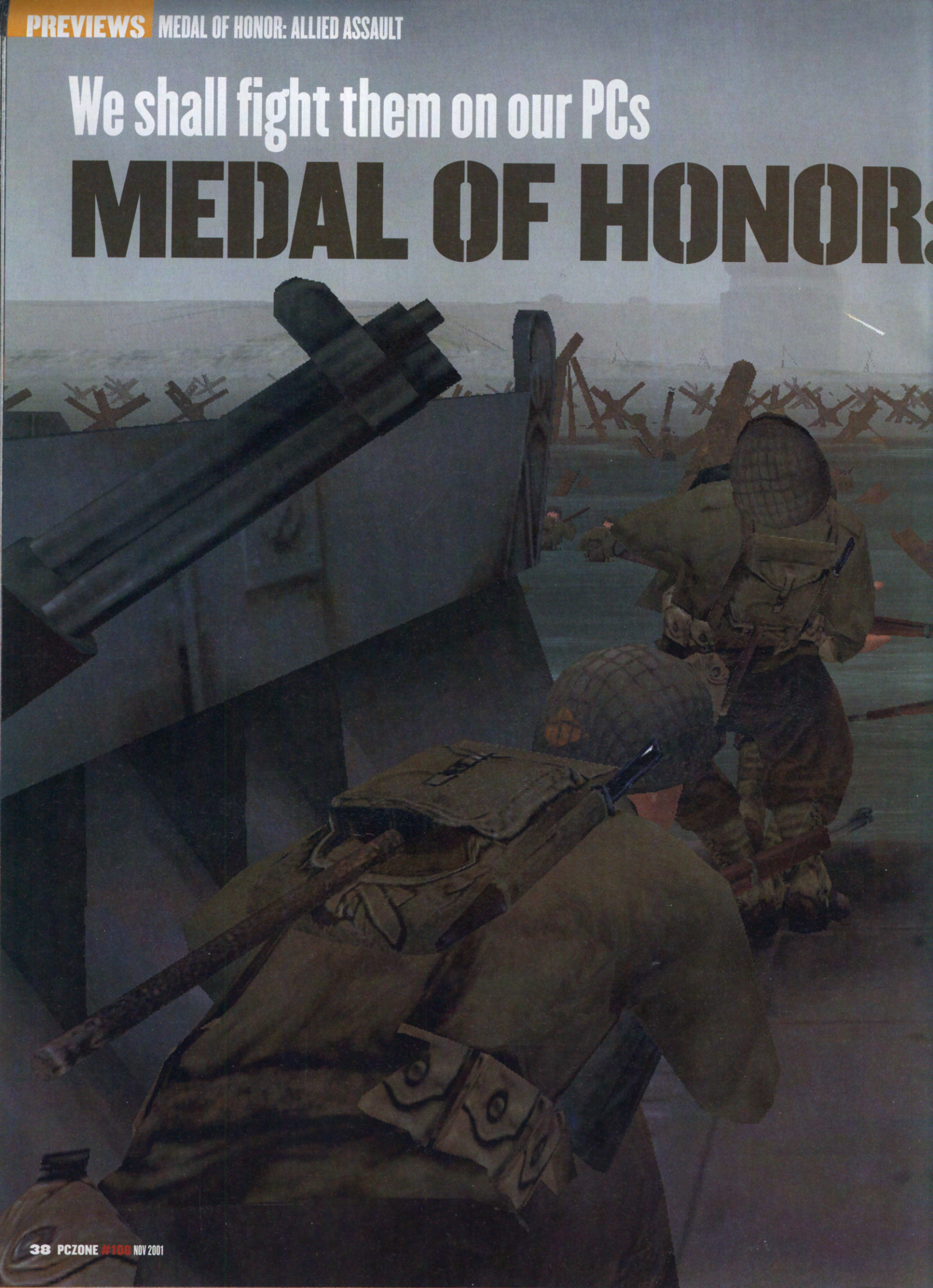
PC CD-ROM

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

EDEN

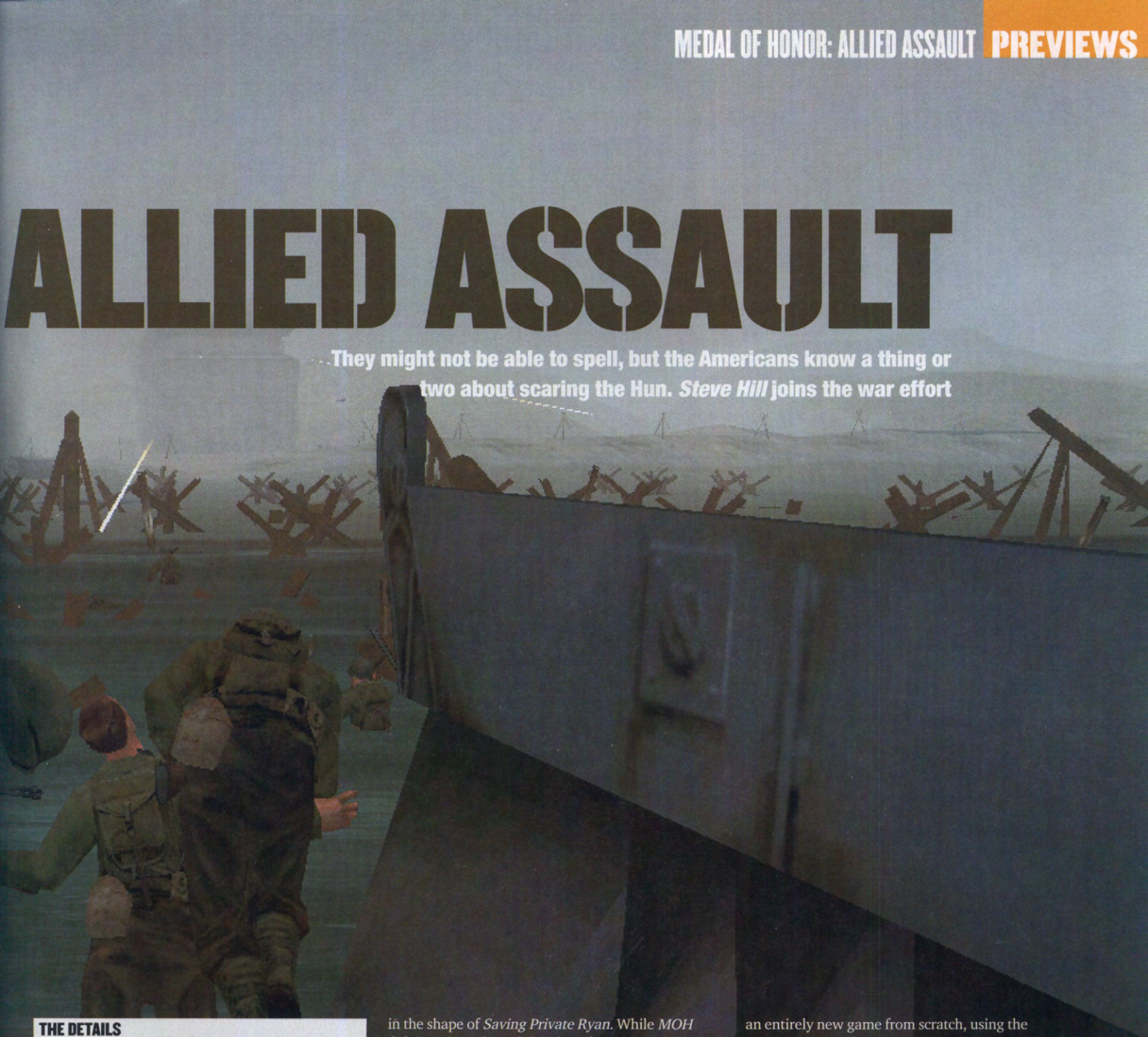
We shall fight them on our PCs

MEDAL OF HONOR:



ALLIED ASSAULT

They might not be able to spell, but the Americans know a thing or two about scaring the Hun. *Steve Hill* joins the war effort



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER 2015 Inc
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE http://mohaa.ea.com
OUT November 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Not much, it's only the bleeding World War II
- Completely separate project from the PlayStation versions
- Uses the *Quake III* engine
- You get to shoot Nazis in the face
- And in the stomach
- Anywhere you like, really

We've been banging on about this for ages, but for the hard of thinking, here's a recap. The original *Medal Of Honor* cropped up a couple of years ago on the PlayStation, giving the drooling console generation a rare opportunity to experience a quality first-person shooter. The work of Steven Spielberg's Dreamworks Interactive, it offered a further outlet for his World War II obsession that memorably manifested itself on the silver screen in the shape of *Saving Private Ryan*. While *MOH* didn't quite scale such heights of apocalyptic bloodletting, it was an extremely playable game that is still worthy of a dabble today. Skulking, sniping, tossing grenades, taking out U-boats, penetrating forts, it was essentially every Sunday afternoon war epic bundled into a commendably authentic experience. The game garnered both critical and commercial success, and the inevitable sequel duly appeared.

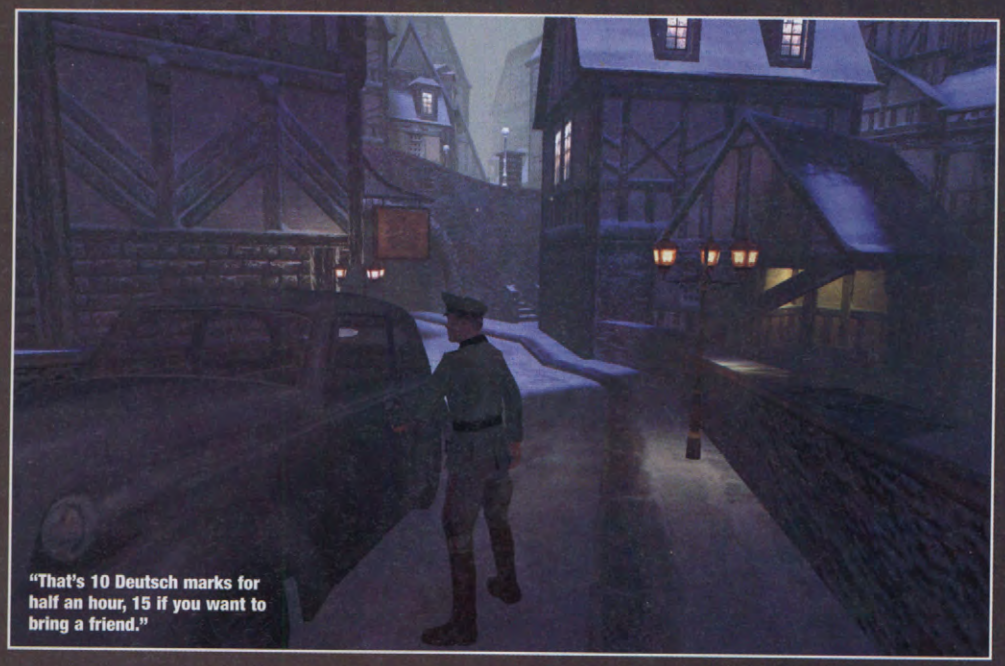
As any fool knows, the PC is the natural home of the FPS, and it didn't take long for the powers that be to envisage a similar game that had the advantage of not looking like the crude daubing of a lower level primate, and in which the key exponent didn't have to be controlled by a device clearly not designed for the task. With dollar signs in their eyes, all it needed was a swift port to the PC, and the old rope would magically turn into money. Admirably, EA decided not to insult PC gamers' intelligence by going down that route, and instead commissioned 2015 to create an entirely new game from scratch, using the *Quake III* engine, no less.

"While remaining true to the intricately structured *MOH* universe, an entirely new story has been scripted"

IT'S IN THE GAME

That game is of course *MOH: Allied Assault*, and it's currently shaping up to offer the ultimate World War II experience, without the inconvenience of death, maiming and lifelong trauma, of course. While remaining true to the intricately structured *MOH* universe, an entirely new story has been scripted, featuring a lead character that the developers consider to be more suited to the PC fraternity's expectations. Out goes have-a-go-hero Jimmy Patterson, replaced by Lt Mike Powell, a professional soldier.

As such, he is more than capable of handling a wide variety of military hardware, and during the course of the game will be given the opportunity to wield more than 16 historically accurate World War II era weapons. Throw in 20 enemy vehicles, including the drivable King Tiger Tank, Stuka Dive Bombers, V2 Rockets and various trucks and Jeeps through a number of missions, and it's safe to say he's going to have his hands full. Providing they're not blown off first.



"That's 10 Deutsch marks for half an hour, 15 if you want to bring a friend."

Other treats include weather and time of day effects, and in common with the original game, a disguise mode in which you outfit yourself in enemy uniforms to evade capture. Don't forget to salute though, or you're likely to be rumbled, and subsequently slain. Something else that has been carried over from the first game is the extremely effective orchestral score, the work of composer Michael Giacchino, which will again be complemented by the award winning *MOH* sound design team.

TIN SOLDIER

But these are just words that could have simply been lifted from a press release to fill up space. What really matters is how the game plays. With this in mind we flew to EA's San Francisco headquarters to have a quick go. That's the kind of sacrifice we at *PC ZONE* are prepared to make to bring you, the reader, the latest in gaming thrills. Of course, when I say *we* flew, it wasn't all of us; that would be absurd. It was actually just me, along with a cross section of the good, the bad and the ugly of the gaming press. In fact, a more ill-suited bunch of would-be soldiers it's hard to imagine.

Here we are then at the EA campus, and I'm duly given an expert run-through of a mission by an elaborately-named American before being handed the controls and tossed into the midst of a war-ravaged town. It soon becomes apparent that people are trying to kill me, so I duck for cover and return fire, sending the stricken Nazis into a spastic dance before they slump lifelessly to the ground. Much has been made of the game's sound, and while the *Spinal Tap*-style speakers certainly help, there's no denying the richness of the audio, with explosions and screams of pain licking convincingly round the room.

"There's no denying the richness of the audio, with explosions and screams of pain licking around the room"

Ducking into buildings, I edge my way towards the objective, a bridge that must be protected to enable a captured tank to roll into town. Pockets of allied resistance occasionally appear, offering the chance to get stuck into the Hun en masse. But orders are orders, and the bridge must be protected. Under prompting, I take position on the top floor of a deserted building with the aforementioned crossing in sight. It's essentially *Bridge On The River Kwai* in reverse, with a detonator on the riverbank, and a seemingly endless supply of Germans prepared to activate it. In sniping mode, I skilfully pick off their runs as the tank lumbers into view. But a transatlantic flight, fitful sleep, and some serious drinking has taken its toll on my co-ordination. Shaking like a dog shitting glass, my aim becomes increasingly erratic until one brave Nazi evades my fire and sets off the explosive charge, bringing the mission to a close and probably costing the lives of thousands. Bollocks. Thank Christ there's not a war on.

NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER

After finishing off this demo level, I locked Peter Hirschman (franchise producer for Dreamworks), Vince Zampella (director of development for 2015), Steve Townsend (associate producer), Erik Kraber (senior sound designer) and Lincoln Hershberger (product manager) into a small airless room and pounded them with the questions you want answering. This is what they had to say...

PC ZONE: How do you think the game will fare over *Wolfenstein*, and more importantly, do you expect it to finally displace *Half-Life* as the best shooter on the PC?

Vince Zampella: The original *Wolfenstein* game is something most of us here at 2015 remember quite fondly. I am looking forward to seeing what Gray Matter and id can do for the sequel, and what I saw at E3 looked fantastic. That said, I think the focus of the two games is quite different. We are going for a slower paced and more authentic feel, while *Wolfenstein* seems to be continuing the more fantasy based groundwork set in the original title.

PCZ: Speaking of realism, the demo we saw at E3 in particular was realistic and harrowing. Are you worried about a backlash from the censors?

Peter Hirschman: Well, in the US we're shooting for a Teen rating. If you want a graphic description of WWII, I'd recommend *Saving Private Ryan* but we're going for a much broader audience. Anecdotally, for the first *MOH* we did a version with blood and dismemberment, but when we took all that out, people didn't notice because our priority has always been animation and AI working together. It's a lot more effective if you shoot someone and they drop the grenade they're holding and clutch their arm, than if they stand there like an automaton with blood spraying out. We just choose to serve the purpose that you recognise you've hit your target through the AI.

PCZ: Why do you think World War II games are so popular at the moment?

Peter Hirschman: It's always been an intriguing subject matter to explore through entertainment – from the moment the War itself actually started – and I'll leave it to a sociologist to explain why that is. I can only answer why we started and continue to make games in the *Medal Of Honor* series, and that's because Steven Spielberg wanted to introduce a new generation to the gallantry, sacrifice, horror, and, ultimately, the triumph of the Allied effort in World

BUDDY, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

In a real war, you need real friends, as well as a real enemy to shoot bullets at

Despite what films *or Return To Castle Wolfenstein* try to tell you, war is not usually a one-man-against-the-world sort of situation. In *Allied Assault* you don't have a squad you give orders to directly, but instead, interaction is AI driven, built into the storyline and completely up to you to get involved in. As Peter Hirschman points out: "It's like you're going in to do something else and you see a group of guys and you think, hey, five guns are better than one."

So, you might be wandering around trying to mind your own business (which is pretty hard in a uniform in the middle of a war field), when you come across a mass brawl. You can either play ball, or walk off whistling, although Peter Hirschman expects you to get involved. "I think it's more than likely players will want to get in the middle. It's kind of like, "Hey you with the bazooka, I wanna be with you." Indeed.

To illustrate the way this works, the team showed us bits from a level called Sniper Town where you have to hook up with a demoralised and frightened squad of American soldiers that have been separated from their unit. You can choose to ignore them and go about fulfilling your original orders, or you can join up and shepherd them through a dangerous environment filled with German troops and armour – and a few elite Nazi marksmen hidden in some choice spots. We weren't privy to what happens at the end, but according to Steve Townsend, "If you choose to help the squad, the results are quite amazing." OK, we're convinced.

The only other sticking point could be the AI. You're not going to want to join in with allies if they're more interested in running up to a corner of a building and trying to wedge themselves in as far as possible. Or crazed killers who don't mind who they're shooting up. Until we've seen a preview build of the entire game we couldn't possibly comment on this, but from the stunning sections of the game we have seen we're supremely confident that most of the NPCs will be significantly more intelligent than either you or us.



Choose from a selection of 16 varied weapons.

War II. It's a cliché, but "freedom isn't free", and as we enter the 21st century, the more people who know that the better.

PCZ: OK, how realistic is the damage model?
Lincoln Hershberger: Hits to different body parts do different damage. If you hit a Nazi in the shoulder, it will knock him off his aim and take a few seconds for him to recover (in which time, you've capped off another shot and taken him out). If you hit one in the foot, he'll still be able to limp away, or drop to one knee and keep firing at you. The number of animations is really amazing. Combined with the damage model, enemies feel more alive than in any other game I've ever played. Once the AI is in, the Nazis are going to be one hell of an enemy. Headshots are one-shot-kills in most cases. However, some less powerful weapons don't penetrate helmets, so you have to shoot twice, the first shot will pop off the helmet, and the second will take them out.

PCZ: And what tools have you got to assist you in this helmet popping?
Lincoln Hershberger: Currently we have 16 weapons in the game. The American Colt .45, M1 Garand, German Mauser KAR 98K, Springfield '03 Sniper, German Mauser KAR 98K w/scope – sniper version, Thompson SMG, German MP40 SMG, Browning automatic Rifle (BAR), Mark II Fragmentation Grenade, Stielhandgranate, American Bazooka, Winchester Riot Shotgun, OSS Hi-Standard Model H-D Silenced Pistol, American M1919A4 .30 Cal Mounted Machine gun, German Maschinegewehr 42 Mounted Machine Gun and the German 8.8cm PAK 43.



Hande hoch.
Hande hoch.

PCZ: How historically accurate is the game in terms of the storyline?
Steve Townsend: History is always better than anything you can make up, and we often use real events as a launching point for a mission. There are some key moments of the European Campaign the game touches on, like Operation Torch in North Africa and the Normandy Invasion in France. What can be even more fun, though, are the missions that focus on real events or circumstances that were crucial in the progress of the war but perhaps not as well known to the public at large. For example, the second mission of the game puts you on the trail of new Nazi technology that will upset the balance of power between Allied shipping in the North Atlantic and the German U-boat fleet – something that could (pardon the pun) turn the tide of war in the German's favour if you don't put a stop to it. It's all real stuff, which makes it all the more exciting.

PCZ: How many missions are in the game and what can we expect to see?
Peter Hirschman: Currently, there are 18 missions in the game and each is broken down thematically into three parts, with multiple loads for each of them.



Medics will act and speak authentically.

So I think there's sometimes even as many as five levels for one mission. By the time you get to Omaha beach it's Level 7 so you've actually got through a significant amount of gameplay at that point. It's not training really, it's more ramping up. Level one you could call training, but it's more traditional ramping, introducing the weapons, the game mechanics and how the enemies will react, though we hope you'll still be surprised even then. By the time you get to Level 7 you've had a bit of experience with the game, so when Higgins' boat door comes down you'll have a fighting chance because you'll be comfortable with the navigation and weapons.

Steve Townsend: In addition to the Invasion levels, the environments vary from the baked desert of North Africa to the frozen tundra of Norway, to the bombed-out villages of France, where whole sides of buildings have been blown apart by artillery – you can see individual rooms, complete with their own wallpaper, furniture, and personal effects. It's really a wonderful amount of detail. Adding to that you have trees and bushes that sway gently in the breeze, and real-life weather like rain, thunder, and lighting, and even snow flurries that make you feel like you're fighting it out in the real world.

"The design team at 2015 have done a lot of fun things that tie the game in with the rest of the series"

PCZ: What can you tell us about the story? Without giving too much away, of course.

Steve Townsend: It's important that each game in the *Medal Of Honor* series tells a good story. For *Allied Assault*, we're introducing a new character, Lt Mike Powell, who is a professional soldier and already involved with fighting the ground war when the game starts. He's a member of the elite US Army Rangers, who were often at the frontlines of each of the major battles in the European Theater of Operations – including D-Day. Fans of the previous games know the Office of Strategic Services (precursor to the CIA) has always played an important part in the series. MOHAA is no different, but we're adding a few new twists this time.

Ever since the first game, the continuity of the *MOH* universe has been a priority for us, and all the missions in *Allied Assault* are intertwined with the established timeline. The design team at 2015 have done a lot of fun things that tie the game in with the rest of the series (including the other *MOH* games in production that will come out after *MOH:AA*).

PCZ: (Waving the British flag about furiously.) You play an American soldier in the game. What recognition has been made of the heroic British effort in WWII?

Peter Hirschman: It's no accident that the game's shell is set in the Cabinet War Rooms at Whitehall (where, personally speaking, I think the world was saved), and we've always gone out of way to educate players that, yes indeed, there were people fighting in the war that didn't have the Stars and Stripes on their uniforms.


Just pop your head up a little more.

We work hard to make sure the context of the missions is clear and accurate, and the game starts with the invasion of North Africa, a campaign that obviously was a major British effort. We know there's been some ridiculous revisionist views of history in some recent Hollywood productions (what's next – Americans saving Stalingrad?), and believe me we're just as frustrated as most people. It's an important issue and we try to do our part to help rectify it.

PCZ: What improvements have you made over the console versions?

Peter Hirschman: Well for a start it's *Quake III* technology. The guys at 2015 have been working with id technology for quite a few years now and of course using the Ritual toolset. So that's a really potent combination and then the engineering team has been making a lot of additions that are very

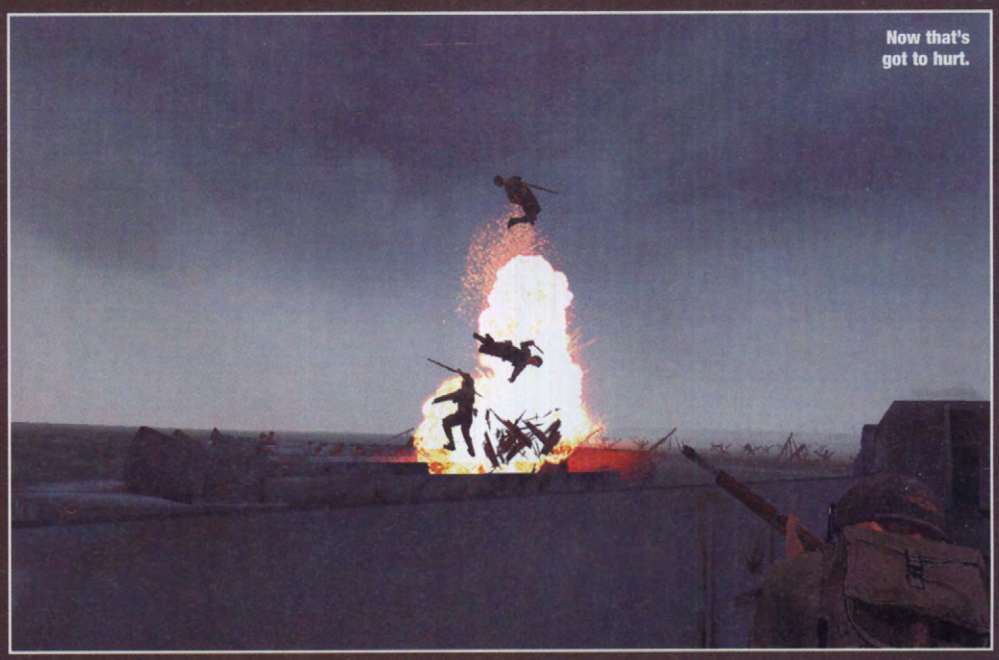
CV 2015

2015 INC

Founded in May 1997 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, they claim that the name 2015 is significant, but enigmatically refuse to reveal why. The tits.

1998 WAGES OF SIN – The official mission pack for Ritual Entertainment's first-person shooter, *SiN*. An expansive add-on, many critics believed it was actually better than the original game. Many critics believed the original game was pony.


Fancy building a sand castle?


Now that's got to hurt.

game specific. Mainly it's been all the stuff we had to do for D-Day, there's no Omaha Beach toolkit unfortunately, so that level's been built through a wild combination of good AI and a lot of scripting, plus a really complex audio matrix for complex dialogue and sound effects.

Of course everyone's going with the expectation of seeing *Saving Private Ryan* and there are a lot of key elements of the real world that they represented so well that we're going to have to try and live up to those expectations. The recording sessions for just that D-Day level took two days, whereas that's how long it took to do the entire dialogue for the entire previous games. It's grown exponentially, but to have a medic applying First Aid and have him saying something intelligent and not saying the same thing twice, takes time. We were fortunate to work with a Vietnam-era medic and we had some dialogue we thought could be better and we spent an hour with him on the phone and that was really trippy, really good. All combat veterans are war historians. He was able to jump straight in and speak to us in authentic '40s medic terminology. Getting the lingo right in the right context, casting the right actor, and then recording it: that's just one little component, but right there, that's half a day's work for just one little element of one level.

PCZ: What innovations is the game bringing to the PC market?
Erik Kraber: For *Allied Assault* we are focusing all our energy on total immersion. When you, the player, hit Omaha beach, you are going to feel like you are right in the middle of the battle. When you sneak around in a snowy forest at dawn, you will hear the trees bend under the weight of recent snow. When it comes right down to it, we like to treat every sound in a game as a special effect, and *Allied Assault* is no different. We will be using every available technology to help us create the realism that has become a staple in the *Medal Of Honor* Universe.
Lincoln Hershberger: Above all it's the production value of *MOH:AA* that will innovate the PC market. And what really takes *MOH:AA* over the top and breathes life into the experience is the sound design, multitude of animations and advancements 2015 has made with the graphics. The wooded areas are amazing and this is the first time in a game where, when you look up into the sun, you're not greeted with lens flare, but by blinding sunlight. It might sound like a small detail, but to see this effect done naturally for the first time is very cool.

PCZ: You picked up a special commendation for sound at E3. What's so special about your noise?
Erik Kraber: It's sometimes a little difficult to work on a project that is set 60 years back in history – it's far enough in the past that it's difficult to have access to materials from the time, but still recent enough that you can't fake too much as there are still people out there who experienced WWII. Fortunately, there are a surprising number of prop houses and WWII re-enactment groups who still have working weapons and vehicles that we've recorded over the past few years. We use those sounds as reference and add extra elements to make them sound more dynamic and distinct. Most weapons sound similar until you study them closely – then you start to notice each weapon's distinct characteristics and figure out how to differentiate them with editing techniques.

The goal of most game audio is to support the visuals and the gameplay, so sound is generally accepted as just a natural extension of those features. It always amazes me that when the game development process reaches the point where we finally implement audio to the visuals and gameplay that have been there for months, the game finally comes to life. Audio makes characters and creatures come alive, environments more atmospheric, gameplay more engaging, and the story flow with emotion.

PCZ: Is the game single-player only, or are you planning multiplayer modes?
Steve Townsend: There will be various head-to-head and team-play modes.

PCZ: Erm, can we take that to mean there will be *Counter-Strike* variants?
Steve Townsend: There will be various head-to-head and team play modes...

Sensing an unwillingness to divulge any further information, I let the team escape to victory. Just before the last one disappeared over the horizon I managed to ascertain that the current shipping date is November 20, a toolset will appear some time after the game is done ("we need time to put together a user-friendly system") and that there's going to be a playable demo (containing one entire mission and approximately 30 minutes of gameplay) available about a month before that. In the meantime, you can get *Saving Private Ryan* out on video and imagine is as a game. Try to stay calm, we know it looks good. PCZ

DON'T MENTION THE WAR

What do the Germans think?

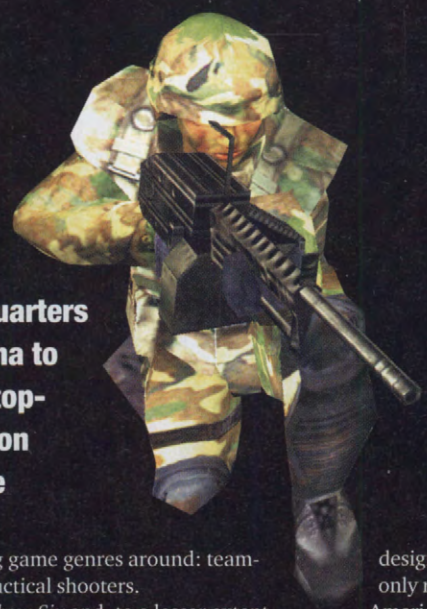
It's a fair enough question, and one that the producers were happy enough to discuss. The Germans, it seems, can't get enough of it, judging by sales of the PlayStation version. Apparently, they don't consider the enemy as Germans, simply as Nazis, and as such are only too happy to meter out the severe kicking they heartily deserve. That said, the *Medal Of Honor* played in Germany has all Nazi imagery removed, with Swastikas replaced by crosses, which seems to us to be defeating the object.

Tom Clancy's...

GHOST RE



CON



Mark Hill **infiltrated Red Storm's headquarters in North Carolina to bring you this top-secret dossier on their latest title**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Red Storm
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.redstorm.com
OUT December 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

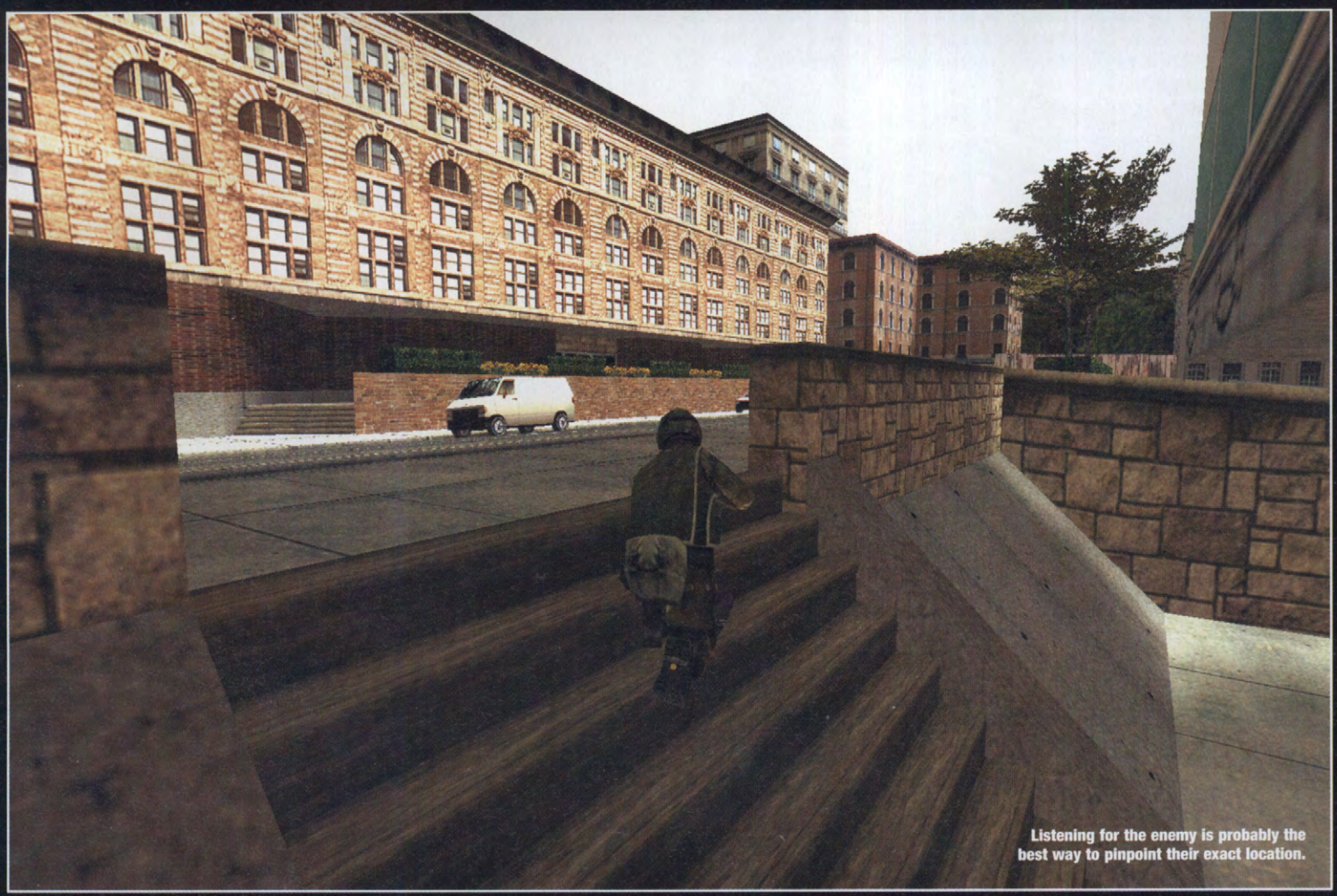
- From the makers of *Rainbow Six* and *Rogue Spear*
- A mix of *H&D* and *SWAT 3*
- Big open spaces realistically recreated
- New on-the-fly command system
- 15 single-player missions that can be played in multiplayer co-op
- Unique characters with RPG properties

He could be classed as an anti-environmentalist, pro-guns, pro-military intervention xenophobe. He also writes incredibly popular bestsellers. Yep, Tom Clancy is a real Captain America; the kind of person who goes to bed wrapped in the stars and stripes and shoots anyone who does otherwise. This is a guy who makes Bush look like a liberal hippy. But besides spreading colonial propaganda (if you want evidence, just read any of his novels), he's also indirectly responsible for the advancement of one of the fastest-growing game genres around: team-based tactical shooters.

Rainbow Six and, to a lesser extent, *Rogue Spear*, were milestones that expanded and improved the formula introduced by *Spec Ops*, paving the way for the likes of *Hidden & Dangerous* and *SWAT 3*. But should we be concerned that such a right-wing figure is behind such important titles? And does it make the forthcoming *Ghost Recon* some kind of right-wing propaganda?

TREEHUGGERS

Luckily for us, Red Storm has its fair share of liberals, including lead designer Brian Upton, whose only reason not to cast Americans as the bad guys is that the game wouldn't sell. In fact, Clancy is connected to *Ghost Recon* in name only. It was Brian who came up with the concept and story and, apart from a "yeah, that looks OK", old Tom has had no input. There was even an unspoken air of resentment down at Red Storm's offices that Clancy takes so much of the credit. "Tom was involved initially with what we were doing," says the game's producer Darren Chukitus, referring to the first years of the company, "but all we take from him is the idea of setting



Listening for the enemy is probably the best way to pinpoint their exact location.


Each level will be huge.


Even the trees look impressive.

"Tom Clancy is the kind of person who goes to bed wrapped in the stars and stripes"

the plots in plausible near-future scenarios and his attention to detail. His involvement usually comes down to providing factual detail."

In this case, that plausible near-future is 2008, when Russia is being taken over by ultra-nationalists. The Russians ask the US to help them crush a rebellion in the Georgian republic, although it turns out it's the Russians themselves who you need to fight since they're trying once more to turn the country to communism against the people's will. Ghost Recon is the army special forces sent out on such delicate missions, and it's your job to lead them to success.

While the feel of the game is very close to the *Rainbow Six* series, it swaps enclosed spaces for vast outdoor environments and a global terrorist threat for international war. Think of it as a cross between *Operation Flashpoint* and *SWAT 3* if you must. The gameplay is instantly familiar though: one shot can still kill you and every step will be brimming with tension. As Brian Upton explains: "Part of what made *Rainbow Six* exciting was that you never knew what was around the next corner and it made you hyper-aware of what was going on around you. The same thing happens in *Ghost Recon* except that instead of contained close-quarters battles you have wide-open spaces. It's not 'what is around the next corner?' it's 'is there someone up on that ridge, hiding behind those trees?'"

And very nice trees they are too. They're probably the most realistic ones we've ever seen in a game. They sway in the breeze and, should you shoot a branch, there's a good chance leaves will fall off and a bird escape into the sky.

THE SMELL OF NAPALM

Red Storm freely admits that in the past its graphics have been one of its greatest weaknesses. While the gameplay of *Rainbow Six* and *Rogue Spear* made up for it, both games soon started to look extremely dated as the likes of *SWAT 3* appeared. Not this time. "We've had so much more time to work on this game than previously, so we were able to really concentrate on making it look great," says Darren. "We rewrote the engine and added lots of special effects. Wait till you see the napalm." Later we did see it, and we were soon converted into regular Kilgores as we watched the world explode into flames delivered from the skies.

There may be other similar titles in progress that are looking better (*Medal Of Honor* and *Global Ops* to name two) but there's no denying the level of detail that has gone into this. You just


You'll be able to issue orders on the fly.

GATHERING OF GHOULS

Ghost Recon's multiplayer game has a few tricks up its sleeve

Besides being able to play all 15 single-player maps in co-op mode, there are six extra multiplayer-only maps. The other modes are Last Man Standing (deathmatch), Hamburger Hill (keeping a zone) and Search & Rescue (find the VIP).

While in *Rainbow Six* you weren't allowed to play as the terrorists, here you can choose whichever side you want. "With the enemy soldiers there is an equivalence that wasn't there with the terrorists," says Brian Upton. "Those were definite bad guys, the soldiers are just on the other side."

Darren Chukitus hopes the more sophisticated gameplay will still be able to attract *Counter-Strike* players: "Having up to 36 people playing deathmatch and getting AI buddies on your side which you can give orders to, it's going to be interesting to see what the *CS* audience will make of it. It provides new challenges for those players."



Will the multiplayer action be even better than *Counter-Strike*?

need to take a look around you at the start of a mission. Your teammates are not only dressed and equipped with total realism, you can see the mud and tears in their uniforms. And instead of the generic faces *Rainbow Six* offered, each character is a unique individual. "We've put a lot of effort into making each of the characters in the game unique," says Darren, "so you can recognise each one as an individual. The same thing goes for the enemies you come across. They're all unique, so it doesn't feel like you're up against the same thing every time. There'll be at least 40 different enemy types."

For each mission you can choose up to six team members from your pool of characters (made up of riflemen, support, snipers and demolition), spread out across three teams (Alpha, Bravo and Charlie). There are also a set of specialist characters which you unlock by completing certain objectives. They're the heroes of the game, who have their own unique weapons and are expertly skilled in their area. But to ensure that you get to know and love your characters, instead of treating them as the disposable commodities they were in *Rainbow*, Red Storm has introduced a few simple RPG elements.

After succeeding in a mission, you can spend skill points on the characters that have survived on leadership (which affects how the rest of the team performs), stealth and endurance (which determines to an extent how much damage you can take). This way you can build up your favourite characters and use them in the ways you choose.

COMMAND AND WANDER

Ghost Recon has dropped the third-person view in favour of full first-person immersion – partly to stop people cheating by looking round corners – but Red Storm is working on a way to record missions that can be watched from all manner of cameras to really show off the engine. The visual improvements don't stop with the 3D action though. The whole interface has been given a major overhaul to make it simpler, easier to navigate and a joy to look at. You can forget all about those complex pre-mission screens that characterised *Rainbow Six*. And gone too is the pre-planning. "Most people tended to ignore the planning – it was too separated from the action," says Brian Upton. This time he's come up with an on-the-fly command system. It works by bringing up a small map of the whole level where you can set waypoints for the teams under your command in a matter of seconds. It's a clean, crisp interface that is a breeze to use. You can also set their rules of engagement so they shoot when shot, shoot on sight or lay suppressive fire in a certain direction. By combining these commands you can set up ambushes and intricate plans, reacting to the action in a flash. And, because you can jump into any of your characters at any time, you can perform any of the actions you want yourself.

Another important addition to the in-game interface is the threat indicator. "We've had a lot of controversy at Red Storm about this because it's not entirely realistic, but we decided we really needed something like this," Brian explains. "The maps are 400 x 400 metres, so they're pretty big. We needed a way for you to find your enemies, to point you in the right direction and not be stranded on one level looking for the last enemy soldier."

It's very simple and works beautifully. A circle in the centre of your screen is divided into segments which light up to show which direction they're in, while another layer lights up red when you're being shot so you know where they're firing from. "It doesn't give so much information that it makes it an unfair advantage but it really helps with the gameplay. It only gives you a general idea of where the enemies are. Of course, you can turn it off if you're a sucker for realism."

And I suppose that's what Tom Clancy means to *Red Storm*. It's not about American imperialism, flag-waving or wiping out any other way of life (we've already got *Soldier Of Fortune* for that). It's about getting the uniforms and the weapons right, it's about making the context believable, and that's only an incidental part of *Ghost Recon*. Suckers for realism? Nah, we'd rather play a game. And this one looks a good 'un. PCZ

"The trees sway in the breeze and, should you shoot a branch, there's a good chance leaves will fall off and a bird escape into the sky"

Q&A

DARREN CHUKITUS



We rounded up the producer of Ghost Recon *to ask him a few impertinent questions, and some serious ones too while we were at it*

PCZ Do you have any qualms about your close connection to the military?

DARREN What we use from the military is just a high-level concept and nothing more. It's intriguing to them how we've been able to generate scenarios that could happen in our day and age, but we don't have any misconceptions about what war is, and I don't think our audience does either. We make these games for their entertainment value, not to be used as training sims.

PCZ Have you been influenced by the games that appeared after *Rainbow Six*, like *Hidden & Dangerous* or *SWAT 3*?

DARREN We all play all the games that come out, and it's my job to see what others have done right and whether we should incorporate it into our games. The problem with a lot of developers is that they become reactionary when they see a new feature. They decide to use it without looking at the design issues in their own game and considering if it actually enhances their gameplay.

PCZ There are vehicles (choppers, tanks etc.) in the game, but you can't use them. Why?

DARREN *Operation Flashpoint* does that and, while it works alright, we would want to make each vehicle a full-blown simulation rather than an arcade-style aside. Maybe in *Ghost Recon 2* we will.

CV

Red Storm ENTERTAINMENT

RED STORM

Started by Tom Clancy, the company has occasionally strayed from the tactical shooter, but without much success

1998 *Rainbow Six* is released to worldwide acclaim. Unlike the poor RTS *Dominant Species*

1999 *Rainbow* sequel *Rogue Spear* offered more of the same with better graphics while *Force 21* was a misconceived 3D real-time strategy game that stuck to the Clancy world of international conflict

2000 The dreadful *XCOM*-style *Shadow Watch* is released as are a string of very late add-on packs for *Rogue Spear*

2000 After dallying with some Anne McCaffrey games (the rubbish *First Resistance* and the acceptable *Dragonriders*), Red Storm concentrate on what they do best. *Rogue Spear: Black Thorn* and *Ghost Recon* should be out by the end of the year

F1 2001

And! It! Looks! Like! *Steve! Hill!*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Image Space Incorporated
PUBLISHER EA Sports
WEBSITE www.imagespaceinc.com
OUT Autumn 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- All new physics engine
- Features this season's data
- Motion captured pit stops by the Benetton team
- Ricardo Zonta likes it

They might sound like a nest of angry wasps on the telly, but up close and personal, Grand Prix cars make a terrifying din. How do we know? Because we recently spent time with the Jordan team during testing at Italy's Monza circuit. In fact, we were there on the day Michael Schumacher careered off the track at high speed, but we were relieved to see the arrogant German walk away unscathed.

So what were we doing rubbing shoulders with the great and good of the Grand Prix circuit? Looking at some bleeding game, obviously. That game was *F1 2001*, and it was freely available to play in a hospitality suite above the Jordan pits. Juxtaposing a mere game with the real thing was something of a gamble by EA, but one that appears to have paid off, as even at this early stage it appears to be a comprehensive simulation of the sport.

And if you don't believe us, ask Jordan driver Ricardo Zonta. The diminutive Brazilian took the seat beside me and proceeded to slew all over the track before sloping off muttering about understeer. However, he later returned, set up the car to his liking, and promptly posted the fastest lap of the day.

YOU CAN DRIVE MY CAR

What about the average prole, though? How are they supposed to cope? Thankfully, the game will have 11 different assists, and as producer James Hawkins says: "We're trying to help the player to actually learn to drive the car, so we'll start the car to turn in for example, because people struggle to find the turning in point. Also, at the easiest level in the game, we'll start the car to brake when it reaches a good braking point, because people generally brake too late."



Get out of the way. Get out of the way. Oh Forgeddaboudit.

Assists or not, it's definitely a seat-of-the-arse experience. Hawkins says: "I think this game is going to be raved about in the way that *Grand Prix Legends* was raved about for how good the car feels to drive, and how you can actually equate that to a real car. We have a very mixed audience, obviously, because on one hand we have the guys who play these games because they're the closest they can get to driving these cars. They want simulation racing, for want of better words. And at the high end, with all of the difficulty assists turned off then we pretty much get that."

IT'S RAINING, MEN

As for periphery, all the data from this season is being included, along with, perversely, the actual weather conditions of individual races. For instance, it will start raining on the exact same lap it did in the actual race. However, development is due to finish before the season ends, but online updates are promised for those who want to replicate the proceedings exactly.

> **"It's the extreme attention to detail that will appeal to the hardcore Formula One fans"**

It's this extreme attention to detail that will appeal to the hardcore Formula One fans. And if the new physics engine can cope with 22 cars on the track at once (unlike the 99 version), then *F1 2001* could well be a strong contender for pole position in the genre. PM



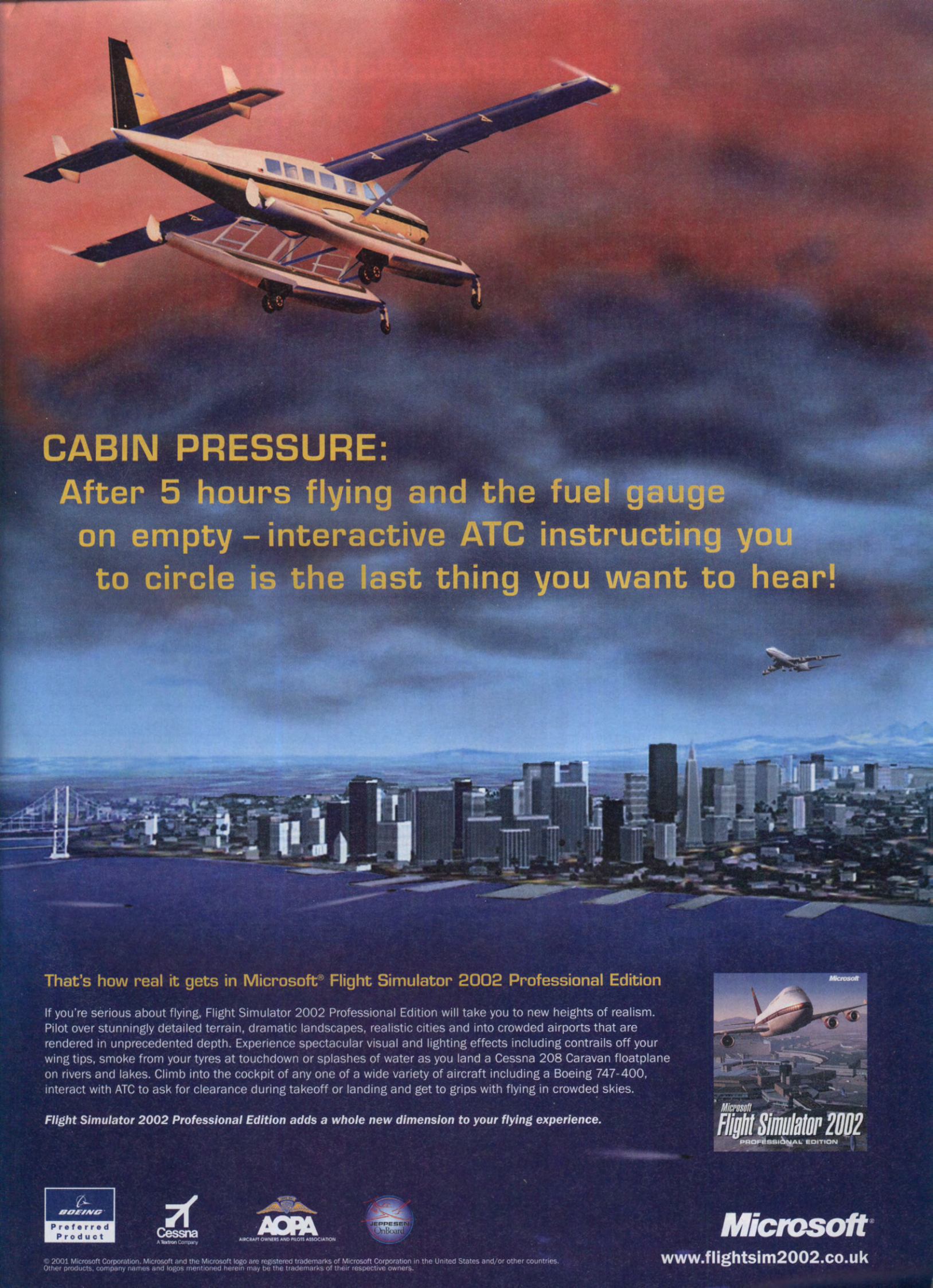
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For the best loan rates, drive a jaguar. Hold on that's not right.



Graphically F1 2001 is looking superior to any other F1 game around.



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SPIDER-MAN

Spider-Man's had more issues than Woody Allen and now he's got a PC game. *James Lyon* investigates

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Treyarch/Neversoft
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.neversoft.com
OUT Autumn

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's just like the comic
- It's a proven bestseller
- Uses the *Tony Hawk* engine
- You can crawl on the ceiling

The thing about writing a preview to a game that's already been there and done that on PS, N64 and Dreamcast – and with a sequel on its way – is that all the jokes have been done before. Typical. How am I supposed to fill space with tired jokes about Spider-Man getting washed down the plughole and eating flies if every other journalist in the business has managed to get there first? Might as well get on with it...

We all know the bullet points by now. Done by the people who did the classic *Tony Hawk's*... blah... faithful to the comic book... blah... topped the charts... So, as the hype of the Sam Raimi-directed blockbuster behemoth ambles into consciousness, Activision have decided to port the game onto the PC. Like most console conversions, though, don't expect much in the way of new features. In fact, don't expect more than minor graphical improvements in the way of new features. Having said that, unlike most of Capcom's efforts, Activision have made sure the resolution can be ramped up to a crisp 1600 x 1200 as Spider-Man swings and slings his way over the towering phallic constructs of New York City. The impenetrable green fog of the 32-bits (conveniently explained by the story) still obscures the latte-drinking neurotics of the blood-strewn streets, though.

EXCELSIOR

Compared to the comics – in which the storyline got so tangled up in a complex web of impostors, clones and spin-offs that they kept having to start again – we'll be getting a relatively straightforward story that ties in many of the elements from that wealth of (dis)continuity. Which boils down to cramming in a host of Spidey's classic enemies for him to fight. Examples? Sinister special effects expert Mysterio, the mechanically limbed Doctor Octopus, and symbiotic alien-suit, Venom. On the side of good, expect cameo appearances by the type of people who'd get pelted with paving slabs, wearing the kind of costumes they did, if they couldn't snap a man's neck with their little finger. True believers can even explode at the sound of Stan Lee's ubiquitous voice introducing proceedings. After completion, players can replay levels to gain familiar costumes and hidden comics, ramping up the longevity and providing further immersion into the Marvel universe.



I'll take you all on.

"True believers can even explode at the sound of Stan Lee's ubiquitous voice introducing proceedings"

HOT SPIDER SEX

As well as standard punches and kicks, Spider-Man can call on his web fluid to complement his moves, pull himself onto distant surfaces, and shield himself from attack. A favourite of ours being the ability to capture, then yank a felon towards a waiting fist. Along with the ability to crawl on any surface, you're getting the whole experience. The question is, whether the camera can keep up. We should have the demo ready for you to try out for yourself next issue, along with a full review where we'll be able to tell you whether this and the controls can carry through the whole game without irritation.

While we know how well it did on console, we're going to pretend we've never heard of it before so we can give you our opinion when it arrives on the rectangular beige monstrosity. Which isn't in fact as stupid as it sounds, as we've seen countless examples of so-called good console games not performing so well on the PC. But there have been a handful that actually do work. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*, for instance... hey, wait a sec... *Spider-Man* does look surprisingly promising, though, and is already acclaimed as one of the most faithful comic book adaptations yet. We just need to find out how it plays in the assumedly arcade-hostile world of the PC. PCZ



Do you think he works out?



Trapped like a fly in a... er... spider's web.



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PC Gamer

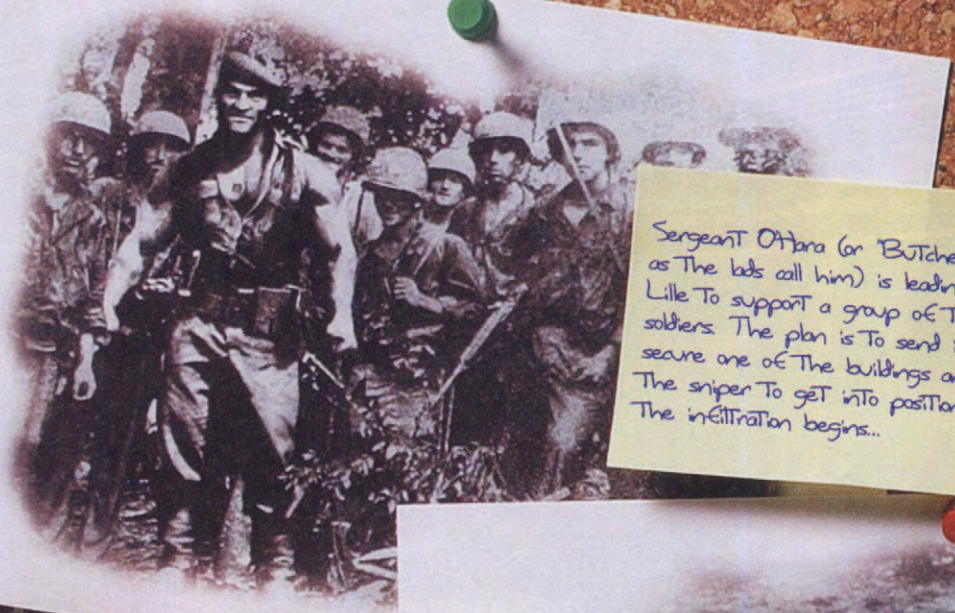
www.redfaction.com

volition

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COMMAND CENTRE



Sergeant O'Hara (or "Butcher" as the lads call him) is leading us into Lille to support a group of trapped allied soldiers. The plan is to send in a soldier to secure one of the buildings and allow the sniper to get into position. Then the infiltration begins...





Saw Sergeant Blackwood in action today. I can see now why they call him "Finis". He managed to take out a guard, steal a boat and get the entire troop upstream through heavy current.

Jaw - dropping graphics and a variety of locations across Europe, Asia and the Pacific.





Use the environment like never before.



Move inside buildings and vehicles. View the action from any angle.

MORE REAL THAN REAL LIFE

COMMANDOS HEADQUARTER DATA

COMBINED OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS
1A RICHMOND TERRACE
WHITEHALL, S.W.1

NAME JACK "BUTCHER" O'HARA
DATE OF BIRTH OCTOBER 10TH 1909
PLACE OF BIRTH DUBLIN
COUNTRY IRELAND
CURRENT GRADUATION SERGEANT
HEIGHT/WEIGHT HEIGHT 6 FEET 5 INCHES WEIGHT 220 POUNDS.

TOP SEC

BACKGROUND
Enlists in 1929.
1934-37 Boxing champion in the British Army
1938 Condemned to 14 years ... military pris...

To: Michael Smith
Cc:
Subject: Review

Mike,
Started playing Commandos 2 and I am speechless. I have never seen anything like it before. I've been on to www.commandosgame.com and I found these reviews:

"More diversity, more ideas, more characters, more weapons, more choices...More fun." - PC Format

"...the strategy sequel of the year..." - PC Gamer

"...if it doesn't finish the year as one of the top three titles on any format, then we'll all wear turquoise shell suits until the day we die." - PC Gameplay

"Incredible looking environments and the huge amount of depth and subtlety will have you hooked for an age." - Games Master

Mike.
I am starting to get a little concerned about you. Please can you stop playing Commandos 2 and come downstairs. With all of your talk of World War 2 I am beginning to think that you believe it is real!
Your loving girl friend
Joanne xx

That Yank Samuel Brooklyn is a real character. We came across an obscure make of Chinese Tank, but he was straight into the cockpit and wheeling the turret around to take out a machine emplacement without blinking an eye!

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MEN OF COURAGE

MAKING HISTORY

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PYRO STUDIOS

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

REVIEWS

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

It starts here...

REVIEWS EDITOR Martin Korda



A few weeks back I walked into my local branch of Midland Bank, sorry HSBC, and was suddenly struck by a feeling that something wasn't quite right. After a minute or so of careful perusal it suddenly hit me. The whole place was covered in Christmas decorations. 'What in the blue hell is going on here?' was my first reaction, but I soon came to the conclusion that they must have been running some kind of a great mortage deal which in someway implied that Christmas had come early for its borrowers. You know the, 'Save 28p per month on your mortage thanks to our latest 0.00001% interest rate decrease' kind of thing. Which got me thinking about the state of the PC games industry of late. Over the last few months, there haven't been that many big name games hitting the shelves, but as we slowly approach the Yuletide season, things are going to start to speed up again on that front. Starting now.

This month we kick things off with the endlessly delayed *Commandos 2*, which we finally got our hands on after months and months.... and months and a few more months of waiting. Turn to page 56 to find out what we thought of it. Following hotly on its heels is the latest *Championship Manager* update (p62). This time however, instead of simply handing it over to self confessed *CM* addict Steve Hill, we decided to get a second opinion from his namesake Mark, just in case he was being bribed by Sports Interactive. As it turns out they both loved it just as much, which means either it really is *that* good or Mark Hill has also been dragged into the same mire of bribery and corruption as Steve. My guess is it's the first one, but then again I would say that as both Steve and Mark paid me to say so.

After these two comes yet another hotly awaited game, *Throne of Darkness* (p68) which has raised more than its fair share of eyebrows around the office. Click Entertainment has created a truly stunning RPG full of action and original ideas which makes it stand out from the majority of the competition. As a result it shoots to the top half of our RPG Top 10.

Unfortunately, the eagerly awaited *Red Faction* proved to be somewhat of a disappointment. But then again if this really is the start of the great run in to the Christmas games bonanza, we've got to expect a few turkeys along the way.

MOST WANTED... SHOOTERS



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
Activision • ETA November 2001

AVP 2
Vivendi • ETA December 2001

GHOST RECON
Ubi Soft • ETA December 2001

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
EA • ETA February 2002

JEDI KNIGHT 2
Activision • ETA March 2002

UNREAL 2
Infogrames • ETA May 2002

DOOM 3
Activision • ETA TBC

QUAKE 4
Activision • ETA TBC

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
Take 2 • ETA TBC

HALO
Microsoft • ETA TBC

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 08705 143525 • **CDV** 020 8880 4144 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450134 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **EON** 0700 4366344 • **Infogrames** 0161 837 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Koch Media** 01256 707 767 • **Microids** 01908 223 377 • **Microsoft** 08457 002 000 • **Midas** 01279 858000 • **Novalogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 01932 838 230 • **Virgin Interactive** 020 7551 4266 • **Vivendi** 01189 209100

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game receives a Classic award in PC Zone you know that it's going to be brilliant. We reward originality and innovation, but we also rate games that take an existing genre to new heights. It's the experience that counts – if it delivers top-notch entertainment, we'll stamp it with our seal of approval and you should go out and buy it.

80-89% We don't give out 90% scores willy-nilly and this means that there's a mass of superb games that miss out on the Classic rating. This is where the Award of Excellence comes in, an accolade for a game that we believe is far superior to others in the genre.

70-79% Our reviews are much more than just a number at the end. If a game scores in this category it's well worth a punt and provides quality entertainment, but make sure you read the text to see why we didn't think it was worthy of an Award of Excellence.

50-69% We score all our games from a full percentage which means that a score of 50% is an average game – worth considering if you're bored with life and there's no football on the television. Take this closer to the 70% mark and you're looking at a quality game with the ability to impress.

20-49% These games just about manage to keep their heads above the excrement, but only just and shouldn't be considered unless you've exhausted every other avenue. Why should you waste your time playing games that are sub-standard or below average? You're better off with one of our cover discs.

0-19% Incompetence, sloth or just a desire to cash in and make an easy buck? Either way, there are no excuses for these games. Avoid at all costs and if possible make a mental note of the developer's name and stick it on your blacklist.

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre



DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Mr Driller* and *Proball*

If you were a commando, what would your specialist skill be?

Brown-nosing the top brass.



RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Thrust Deluxe* (http://members.home.nl/wdw)

Cheering everyone else on.

COMMANDOS 2:

Strategy at its best with this stunning sequel



P.56

BUDGET ZONE

Buying games on a shoe-string? Check this out



P.80

FEEDBACK

Voice your opinions on the latest games



P.102

REALITY CHECK

Steve Hill swaps his gamepad for some football boots



P.104

REVIEWS POLICY

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day and which ones you should point at and laugh. For that reason, *PC ZONE* works a little differently to any other games magazine.

FINISHED CODE

We only review finished code which is released by the publisher. On occasions this means reviewing from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the box.

HONEST REVIEWING

If there are problems with a game we'll tell you about them even if it means falling foul of some of the big names in the industry. We're not in print to serve as an advertising tool to publishers or big name developers with an ego problem, we're here to give you our honest opinions of a game.

THE REVIEWERS

Our reviewers are the best in the industry both in terms of experience and ability. We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field. You won't find an RTS being reviewed by an FPS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the benchmark titles and knows how each game stands up in the face of the bigger picture.

THE MACHINES

We test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In our office we have access to a wider range of machines from the lowly P233 to the 1.4GHz behemoth. If we spot any aberrations between developer claims and real-life testing we'll let you know.

ONLINE GAMING

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, which means that it's impossible to properly review the online side of a game simultaneously. Instead of taking a wild guess, or testing it on the comfort of the office LAN, we'll wait until servers are running and then revisit the game in our dedicated online section.

DISAGREE?

After all this you might still disagree with us. If so then write in and complain to our Feedback section, which is where we give you the chance to have your say and where any rumblings are answered by the individual reviewer.

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We cast our eyes over the latest arrivals in the bargain bins.

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Here's your chance to have your say on the games you love and hate the most.

104 REALITY CHECK
Steve Hill pops on his boots and joins the pros in a real life comparison to *FIFA 2001*.



MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Quake III: Arena*

Hiding in the cupboard.



ANTHONY HOLDEN
GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Proball*

Subordination.



RHIANNA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Throne Of Darkness*

Blending into the shadows and animal noises.



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Manager 01/02*

I'm a pacifist. I've dodged Spanish military service, you won't catch me.



STEVE HILL
GENRE Management, sport, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING Champ Man 01/02

Ligging.



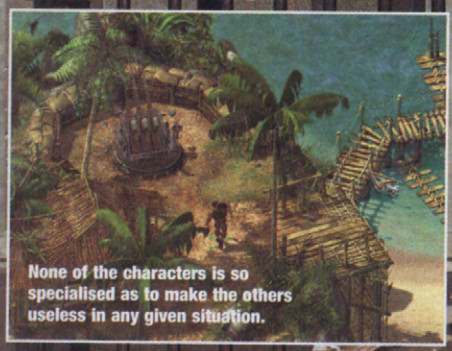
JAMES LYON
GENRE Action and adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Deus Ex*

The skill to quick save every two minutes.

COMMANDOS 2:



You can give limited orders to groups of Allied soldiers.

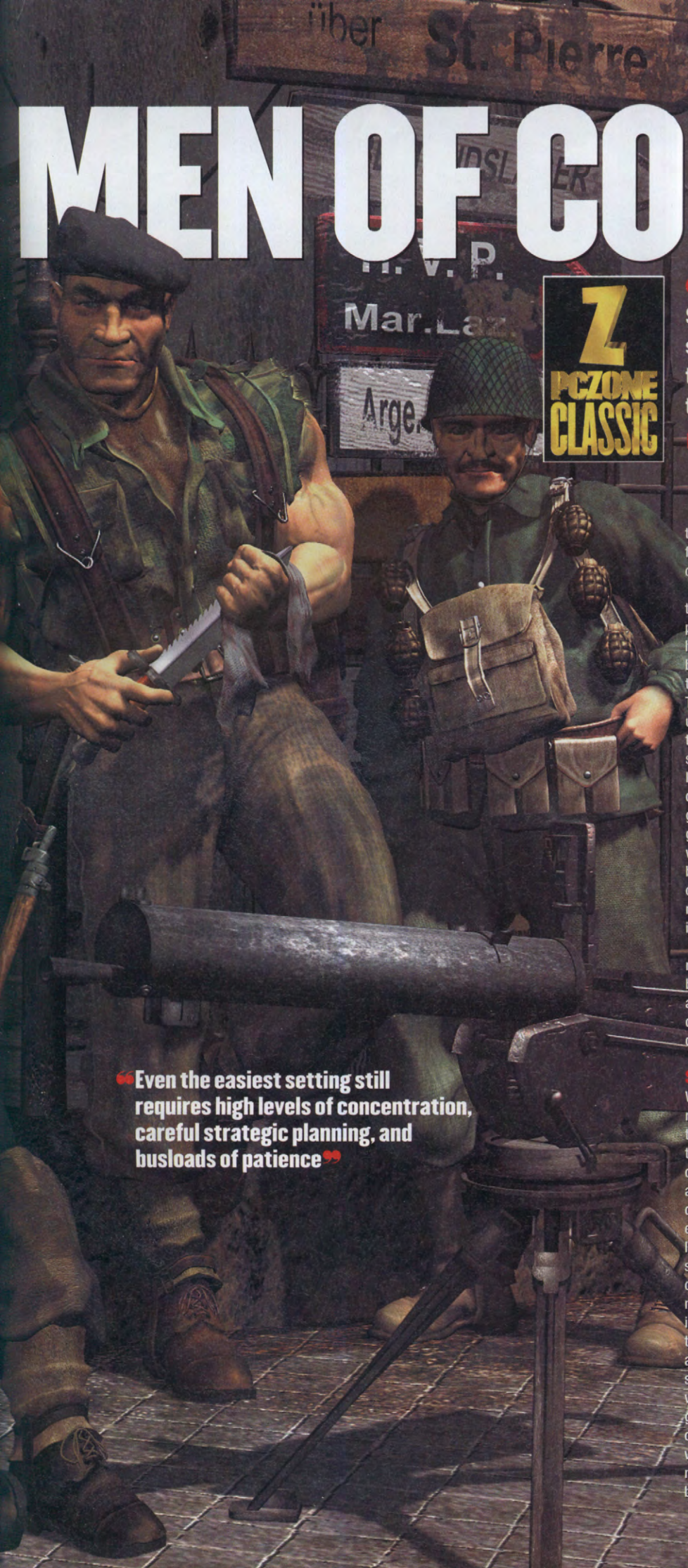


None of the characters is so specialised as to make the others useless in any given situation.



There is no set way to complete a mission, you can choose your own path.

MEN OF COURAGE



★ £34.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

Some games are too big for one person, so we sent *Mark Hill* and *Raoul Capello* in together to review the sequel to one of the hardest games ever

The early 1940s were hard times. Young men were sent away to war to lose life, limbs and mind, countries were turned to rubble and rationing forced the nation to live on a diet of powdered egg and hot gravel.

Well, if they thought they had it tough they should have tried playing *Commandos*. Many a hardened journalist has been brought to his knees while playing the World War II strategy bestseller. The insanely high difficulty level, unforgiving gameplay and the fact that you couldn't save in-game saw you repeatedly restarting levels, only to see your soldiers dead before you knew what was going on. It's a testament to the game's quality that, although it was so demanding it should have been confined to a modest fanbase of hardcore gamers, it became a massive hit, topping every chart in the computer-playing world.

Well, *Commandos 2* is not only more accessible, it's also much better looking, immensely playable and quite probably the most detailed game we've ever seen. It deserves to be an even bigger hit.

"Even the easiest setting still requires high levels of concentration, careful strategic planning, and busloads of patience"

SOFT AS NAILS

We're not saying this one's easy, mind you. There are two features that make it a breeze compared to the first game: a selection of difficulty levels (easy, medium and hard) and a blissfully useful quick-save option. But even the easiest setting still requires high levels of concentration, careful strategic planning, and busloads of patience. Newcomers should not be put off, though. The game includes some impressive tutorials to teach you all you need to know and the missions themselves are so well designed even people who've never touched a strategy game will be hooked after a couple of hours. Hardnuts needn't worry either. For all those masochists who loved the first one because of, rather than in spite of, its difficulty, the hardest level is just as insanely impossible.

And now that we've answered the first question most people will have had (come on, how many of you were left spitting in frustration after playing just the demo of *Commandos 1*?) we can concentrate on the game itself.

Once again you're in control of a team of highly trained Allied soldiers sent on the most dangerous assignments during the Second World War. All the characters are back, led by the Green Beret Jack "Butcher" O'Hara, and three new ones have been added: Natasha (a Russian spy who specialises in seducing the enemy), Lupin (a lithe little burglar who can climb walls and nick objects from soldiers) and the most original addition, Whiskey (a bull terrier who can transport small objects and take them from character to character). But, this being a superproduction, it's not just the cast who's got bigger, the sets have multiplied in size.

The first game might have had a hint of Cannon Fodder and Syndicate about it, but it was fundamentally a whole new take on the real-time strategy genre, bringing stealth, team-work and far greater control over your actions than most RTSs allow. The sequel takes it all to a whole new level, not least thanks to the new 3D engine that allows you to rotate the camera and zoom in to the smallest areas of the huge (and we mean obscenely huge) maps. You feel in total control of your surroundings, spinning one way and another to find the best possible tactic, like a chessmaster pacing around a board.

This time you can also enter any building, submarine, underwater tunnel, basement or vehicle in sight. If the first game offered some fairly basic soldier toys to play around with, *Commandos 2* gives you an artisan recreation that is almost obsessive in its attention to detail.

This is a real world miniaturised to fit onto your screen, not some chalked up sketch. There are 12 missions spread out across ten locations. And if you think 12 isn't that many, you haven't taken in our comments about them being huge.

FOR EXAMPLE

You start off in a Normandy village, devastated by bombings (not unlike the one in *Saving Private Ryan*) and occupied by Germans. This is the smallest map in the game, but it will still take you around three to five hours to complete. There are dozens of buildings, a river you need to cross, loads of Nazis and a big gunfire battle raging on between Allied and German soldiers at one end of the level.

Another map has a full-size replica of the Eiffel Tower, which you can explore fully, and another an absolutely enormous aircraft carrier. There are changes of scenery with a tropical island of crystal clear waters and a submarine base in the snow-covered Iceland. WWII buffs will probably enjoy the level on Colditz the most; the prison duplicated in such astounding detail you could spend all week just looking at it, never mind playing in it. And it just might take you a week to complete some of the levels, although the fact that there's no set path, and no *right* way to complete a level encourages exploration and experimentation.

But what's really incredible about *Commandos 2* is the overwhelming sense of actually being there, the total immersion in a realistic surrounding. This feeling is not uncommon to good first-person games, or even third-person ones, where you move through the environment and use the screen as an extension of your eyes; but in a top-down strategy game?

But it's the perfectly balanced (if occasionally tilting to a mammoth challenge) gameplay that will keep you coming back again and again. No matter how many times you fail, you always manage to get that little bit further, and the sense of achievement easily surpasses the frustration you might feel now and again. There is just so much to see, so much to do, that you simply have to keep going if only to see what happens next. The best way to show you is to give you a few examples.

In the Iceland map, cute little waddling penguins will be alarmed and bring attention to you if they spot you, while polar bears will attack you. In rather hotter climates, you'll find an island with a shipwrecked loony who is perfect for diversions and a group of Japanese school children that you need to rescue. But this being the perfect pinnacle of attention to detail (sorry, there's that word again) the kids run away frightened, calling for help from the German soldiers as soon as they see your scruffy, square-jawed strangers. First you need to find their teacher on another part of the island. When they see him, they'll calm down and come with you quietly.

If you decide to swim underwater, there are not only schools of tropical fish, but also piranhas and sharks competing for a piece of your flesh. Your machine-gun doesn't work in the water, so what do you do? How about getting out and spraying the sea with bullets from the large stationary guns mounted on the shore?

There are so many examples like these we could go on forever, but we'll squeeze a couple more delightful moments, just to whet your appetite even further. Like the way your thief can use his rat to distract soldiers or how you can give Whiskey a grenade and tell him to drop it at the feet of a bunch of Nazis, who are still wondering what a dog is doing there when their eyeballs explode.

"There is just so much to see, so much to do, that you simply have to keep going"

Want to kill a high-ranking officer entrenched in a room at the top floor of a heavily guarded building? No problem. Simply send your sniper to a nearby structure, find a suitable window and you can target him across the street. In fact, windows are a valuable feature in the game. You can climb in and out of them, shoot through them and even stick your head through to spy into the interior.



Levels that are so big you'll need a jeep to get round them safely.

REEL WAR

If it's a WWII film, it's in *Commandos 2*

World War II isn't just an historical event of monstrous proportions, where millions of people died and whole continents suffered horribly. It's part of our mythology. It resides in our collective consciousness, where it can be reshaped into a world of endless fascination. Books, comics and especially films have constructed another WWII. One full of heroes and anti-heroes, of larger-than-life characters and extreme situations. It's almost like an alien universe (in many ways, *Star Wars* is a WWII film in space). And it's in these films that *Commandos 2* has looked for inspiration. And boy has it found it. From *Saving Private Ryan* to *The Guns of Navarone*, passing through the level set on *Bridge Over The River Kwai*, the game steals and adapts from the very best, making each mission an epic WWII film in its own right.



WALKTHROUGH

SAVING PRIVATE SMITH

In the first mission you have to save a soldier. But first you have to free the rest of your own captured characters



1 You start with the thief. Climb the wall past the guard and hop in through the window.



2 Knock the soldier unconscious and free Butcher. He can then tie him up.

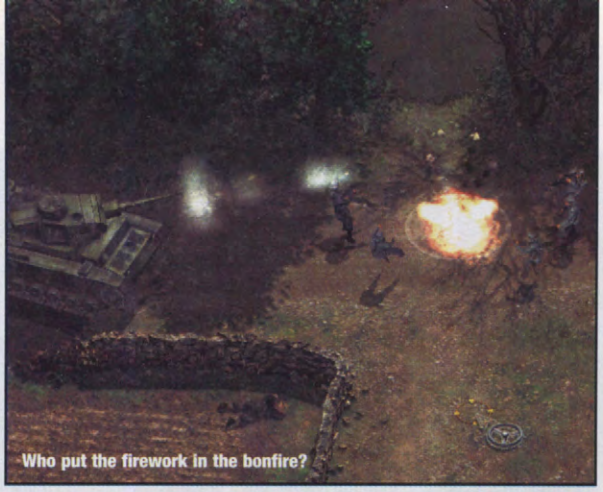


3 Butcher can then swing on the telephone lines to the next building.



4 Killing all these Nazis to free Sapper requires darn-near perfect timing.

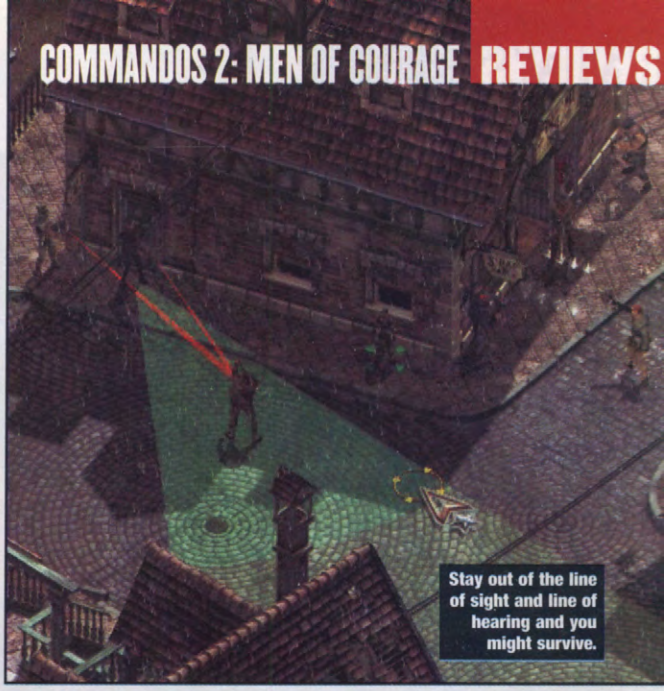




Who put the firework in the bonfire?



The tutorials are shown in sepia tone.



Stay out of the line of sight and line of hearing and you might survive.



Look at the level of detail.

"5-1, 5-1, 5-1!"

Is anyone left cynical enough to be unimpressed? Perhaps we should tell you that you can drive all sorts of vehicles (the aircraft carrier is so big you need a jeep to get from one end to the other) and even command groups of soldiers outside your group. You can't control them directly but you can give them different stances and tell them who and when to attack. They're perfect to cause diversions and to set up massive ambushes.

What else can we possibly say? The interface is easy to use and a considerable improvement on the last one. You can interact with everything in sight and you can play the whole thing in multiplayer co-op mode. (We'll be adding to this single-player review with an online mark next issue if servers are up and running.) A hearing range has been added to the extremely helpful line of sight of your enemies, making stealth even more important. You can tie up unconscious soldiers and steal their clothes. And while these won't let you get away completely undetected if you get too close to the enemy, they serve their purpose from a prudent distance.

The gameplay might still be too fiddly for some, requiring real patience and perseverance. But the only real criticism we can think of is that it's just too big, too overwhelming and dare we say it, slightly repetitive in nature. The fact that the very first level takes more than three or four hours on an Easy setting might put first-timers off, but hopefully the challenging one-more-go-and-I'll-finish-it mentality will mean that even more people buy, play and complete this sequel.

It does so many things you feel like cowering in awe at both its grandeur and the gargantuan task ahead of you. To use the WWII film analogy the game so closely observes, it's a three-hour epic (or 50-hour epic, if you will) with an all-star cast, shot on location all over the world with an unlimited budget. Not only that, it's the DVD edition with all the extras and all the deleted scenes. And you'll want to watch it again and again.

Sequels to successful games are always suspicious creatures, products of a business impulse rather than the creative drive of an artist, made to make money and cash in on that success rather than developing a genuine artistic vision. Not *Commandos 2*. Gonzo Suarez is a visionary on a par with Peter Molyneux or Warren Spector, not the organ-grinder to a corporate machine. The game shares with other sequels the higher budget, the better graphics, the more-of-everything-only-bigger and the number 2. But it's more like *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Godfather Part II*, with its own glorious battle of Hoth and Havana scenes. It's a continuation with a life of its own that doesn't just rehash old ideas. And you simply must play it. PCZ

END



5 Now you can free the sniper who's being tortured in the next building.

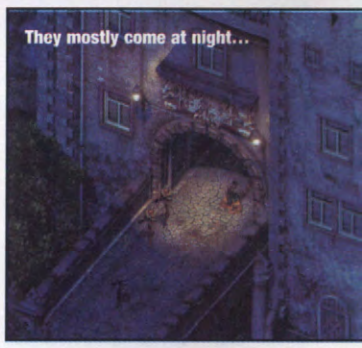


6 Once you have him you can peek out of a window and start sniping Germans.



7 Now they're all together you can go and save Smith. Just a river and a minefield in the way...





They mostly come at night...

IN PERSPECTIVE

There's been a few *Commandos* imitators but none come remotely close to the proper sequel. If you liked the first, you'll love this one. If you didn't, there's still a good chance you'll love this one.

Commandos

Commandos 2

Star Trek: Away Team

Desperadoes

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb video card **WE SAY** Make that a P350 with 64Mb RAM and 16Mb card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Richly detailed • Lots of original ideas • Absolutely massive • Very addictive • Good interface

DOWNERS Still too hard for beginners • Levels too big for people with short attention spans • Controls still fiddly

91 More detailed than real life, and just as addictive

RED FACTION

£29.99 • Volition/THQ • Out September

Arriving at work one morning, *Richie Shoemaker* turns on his PC to find his own face smiling back at him. "Get your ass to Mars." It says

Odd, isn't it, that on approaching an unopened door in your typical first-person shooter, even the destructive force of a rocket launcher won't let you through, yet in *Age Of Empires* a single soldier can bring down a fortress armed with a spear. It doesn't matter of course that behind these doors nothing exists, and that without the ability to destroy what in reality would be a lifelong occupation, the spearman would be a useless pawn in a complex game. But such inconsistencies with reality have over the years become the norm rather than the exception. Rather than ask why we can't open a door, we quite happily walk away to find one that we can. Surely the point of a doorway is to eventually pass through it, or hope to, otherwise why is it there?

Not that *Red Faction* is any less formulaic. True to form there are plenty of door-like unopenings where the illusion of true interaction is destroyed, but what makes Volition's first FPS stand out from its peers is that in those instances where a door is seemingly locked, you can at least blow yourself your own exit. That's the theory anyway.

Much has indeed been made of *Red Faction's* Geo-Mod technology since it was flaunted to the industry more than a year ago. We were told then as we are today, that *Red Faction* will be the only game with 'arbitrary geometry modification for complete environmental destruction', meaning that with a suitably disturbing weapon you will not only be able to take the heads off your enemies, but literally blow the floor from under their feet, the roof from above their heads or indeed the walls that join the two. Ironically, far from 'complete environmental destruction', what we have instead is only partial. Just as *Half-Life*, for example, has doors both functional and cosmetic, so *Red Faction* has scenery that is both destructible and utterly impervious to attack. Shoot a rocket at one wall and it may erupt in a shower of stone leaving a gaping hole for you to pass through. Aim at the exact same material on the other side of a cave and no matter how many rockets you launch at it, the rock will remain intact, albeit slightly charred. Same meat, different gravy.



"How about I climb into the back of your car and shout people with that there machine gun?"

Just for the record, though you can blow holes in solid rock, you can't mutilate corpses. Not that I would particularly enjoy doing so, you understand, but that's another example of the game's inconsistencies.

"The first few levels are fairly poor, and if *Red Faction* were a film, most of the audience would have left their seats"

RE-EVOLUTION

So while *Red Faction* isn't the revolutionary FPS we were led to expect, it still is a good game, though things don't begin at all well. The first few levels are fairly poor, and if *Red Faction* were a film, most of the audience would have left their seats and taken their popcorn with them.

Just so you know, you play Parker, cracking rocks in Martian mines under the armed gaze of the Ultor Corporation, a company not known for its generous employee remuneration policies. Fortunately for our hero, an opportunity presents itself (uncannily enough, as level one starts up), whereby a guard attacks an unco-operative miner and ends up killed, leaving his cattle prod device on the ground for you to pick up and start clubbing everyone else to death. And so begins 20 levels of violent revenge: *Red Faction*, the militant arm of the Miner's Union, versus Ultor and its employees, not to mention of course the odd bit of rubble.

The fight progresses from mines and caverns, through a few subterranean bases, around an orbital station and back to the surface of Mars. Quite a journey, and along the way you get to pilot the odd vehicle as you make your way between the surprisingly varied levels that Earth's closest celestial neighbour offers. The first of these vehicles, as if left on the set of *Total Recall*, is a drilling tank-type thing. Unfortunately, apart from the short thrill of actually driving a vehicle in a first-person shooter, it serves no useful purpose in the game.

Fortunately things improve, and *Red Faction* gets much better later on. Four other drivable vehicles come into your possession, each better than the last, from a submersible to an APC near the end of the game. The levels improve too, thanks in part to an ever-expanding arsenal and a much more intelligent foe. Ultor's main body of troops are fairly standard in their methods, but coming up



Occasionally you meet some chums, but they don't live very long.

WEAPONS OF MARS DESTRUCTION

Lock and load, it's time to blow up some scenery

***Red Faction*'s collection of weapons is something of a mixed bag. The Riot Stick (cattle prod) is rarely used after level one and the pistol, though complete with silencer, is one of the weediest we've used in a PC game. Thankfully the rest of the weapons are far more interesting. The sub-machine gun can fire both regular and armour-piercing rounds, the shotgun can fire full auto rounds and the rocket launcher can fire heat-seeking rockets. But it's the Rail Gun that is the most interesting in that its secondary fire mode allows you to shoot through walls at infrared images of those behind. A tad too powerful for multiplayer games, but a lot of fun in the single-player game.**



Fly and drive different vehicles.



Too much Ready Break there, mate.



The enemy AI isn't brilliant but it does get progressively harder.

against the Mercenaries is quite a shock. They use cover intelligently, make effective use of their weapons and even run around in a fairly convincing manner. Unfortunately the facade is not quite as convincing as it was in *Half-Life*, as while you have access to grenades and satchel bombs, the enemy obviously has little use for such things.

SO NO MUTANTS THEN?

Much how I would love to tell you how engrossing the story behind *Red Faction* is, for the life of me I can't remember what it is. You start as a miner, you rise up against your corporate oppressors and then you kill everyone and go home for tea and biscuits. Along the way you must chase a wrinkled dwarf who looks like Quentin Crisp, save a guy in a suit and kill some woman called (checks in manual) Masako. I'm not saying the story is rubbish, only that it is instantly forgettable. Just pretend you're Arnie in *Total Recall*, without the complications of Sharon Stone or memory loss and you'll probably do just fine.

Where the story fails it is with modest thanks that the gameplay makes up some of the difference. Though puzzles are few and far between, the action is punctuated by a handful of stealthy missions, where rather than kill everyone, you simply have to avoid them. Hardly very difficult, but different nonetheless. Plus there are some entertaining battles to be had, especially in those places where explosions create holes for you to take cover or hide away in. From being too easy the game can get extremely difficult, but never does it become frustrating and it's that feature that will carry most people towards the game's conclusion.

"Just pretend you're Arnie in *Total Recall* without the complications of Sharon Stone or memory loss and you'll do just fine"

Though we've not played the game online, we tried out the multiplayer maps and came away less than convinced, but with the game comes the tools with which those in the know can create new levels, conversions and mods, which is perhaps the greatest legacy *Red Faction* will leave behind. Maybe the part-timers can in time create a game that its original creators could not, one that makes full use of its foundations. There are some great ideas here, which for whatever reason have only partially been realised. Whether it is the constraints of time, money, creativity or technology, Volition's game is remarkable only for what it attempts rather than what it achieves. And so *Red Faction* can be summed up thus: a first-person shooter, where you can sometimes blow holes in the scenery, with designs on being the best PC action game since *Half-Life*, but in fact isn't.



The best weapon in the game, here used to create the best graphical effect.

IN PERSPECTIVE

And still we wait for *Half-Life* to be taken from its throne.

- Half-Life: Generations
- Red Faction
- Codename Outbreak
- Gunman Chronicles
- Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

TECH SPECS

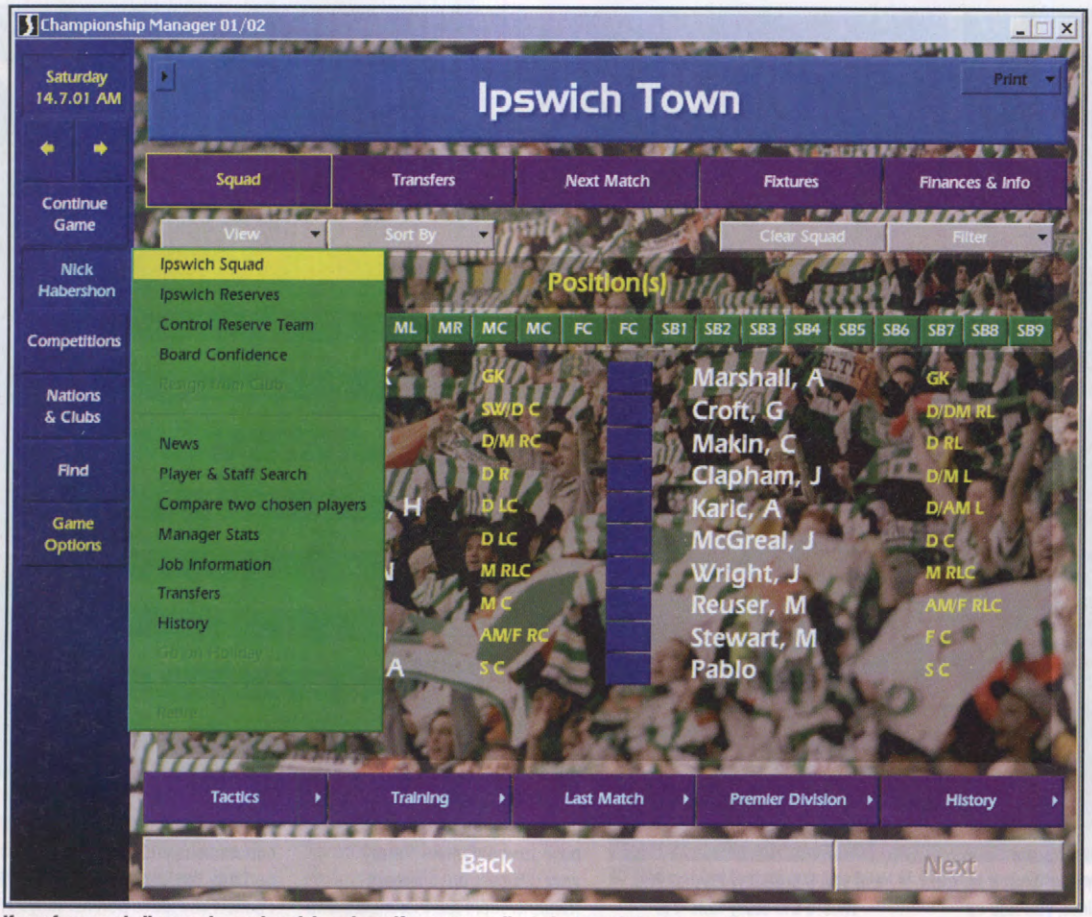
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P350 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** Direct 3D card **WE SAY** P600 and a 16Mb video card

PCZ VERDICT

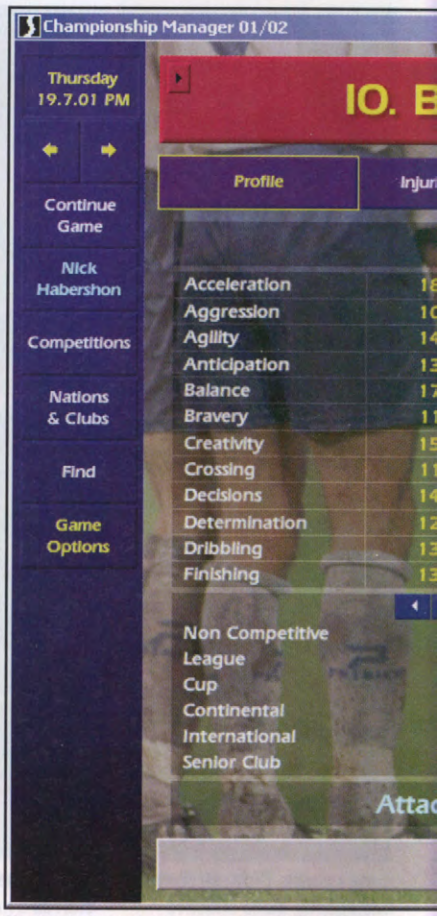
UPPERS AI is OK • Good weapons • DIY tools • Nice glass-smashing effects

DOWNERS Very poor beginnings • Geo-Mod could have been put to better use • Forgettable story

73 Must try harder



If you fancy a challenge, play as Ipswich and see if you can replicate last year's league position.



Playing the transfer market is strangely addictive.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON

£24.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out October

Shameless cash-in or essential update?

Your referee: *Steve Hill*

PC ZONE CLASSIC

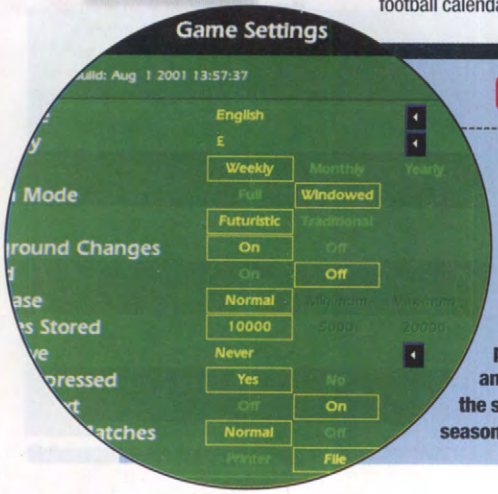
Here we go again. The football season is under way, early optimism has been shattered on the rock of ineptitude, and a bleak British winter is looming fast. What better excuse to shut the curtains and set about creating a footballing empire? Almost as much a part of the football calendar as it is the gaming calendar, only a fool would bet against *Season 01/02* dislodging its predecessor in the top ten and nestling there for a comparable period of time. Or at least until the highly anticipated *Championship Manager 4*.

This is now the third update of *CM3*, and it is tempting to suggest that with all hands on *CM4*, it has simply been knocked out to boost the coffers in the meantime. However, that would be to do a disservice to the legions of researchers who ensure the accuracy of the player database, thus creating the staggeringly realistic experience that fans have come to expect. Of course, by realistic we don't mean motion-captured faces, as in an age of visual extravagance, *Championship Manager* remains defiantly graphics-free, offering an open goal to those who seek to devalue it.

Fortunately (for Eidos), *PC ZONE* has always had at least one *CM* evangelist in the camp, a rich heritage stretching from launch editor Paul Lakin, through Patrick McCarthy, Jeremy Wells, and my good self, with Mark Hill (no relation) snapping eagerly at my heels. It's not without its knockers though. Chris Anderson dismisses it as a glorified spreadsheet, and following successive relegations with Coventry City, Dave Woods won't have it in the house.

PLAYER POWER

But for those who appreciate its merits, it's an enthralling experience, and one that is unique to each individual player. Whereas Mark Hill seeks European glory with the continent's glamour clubs, for me it's always been about Chester City. No more, no less. That's the



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER SEASON SECOND OPINION.

There's two minutes of stoppage time left and we're 4-0 up. It should be safe to bring on *Mark Hill* from the subs bench to prove that Steve Hill isn't in bed with Eidos...

We've been accused of sycophancy when it comes to *Champ Man*. Our 90+ scores and Classic awards are as predictable as the release of another update to coincide with the start of the new footballing season. So to add some more credibility and prove that my namesake doesn't receive regular brown envelopes from Sports Interactive, I've been drafted in to provide an alternate view. I'm not going to pretend that I'm not a massive fan, or even voice the usual cry from the terraces that these slight updates are nothing but a con. The fact is, if I didn't get a free copy of each version, I'd go out and buy one with my own money. (Anyone who's met a games journalist will comprehend the enormity of that statement.) But I can also bring out a scalpel and nit-pick at all its tiny imperfections in order to demonstrate





If anyone supports this team, could they write in?



You're not going to win the league like that.



Michael Owen or Robbie Fowler? Clue – he scored a hat-trick against the Germans.

01/02

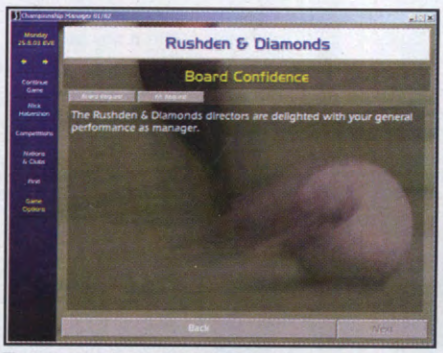
team I support, so that's the team I play as in the game. I know nothing of the likes of Saviola, reduced to trawling the lower leagues for inexpensive journeymen while struggling to field 11 fit players.

his preview, Mark talked about players in the game developing personalities. This is absolutely true, but considerably more so when you actually know some

"I find it difficult to drop a goalkeeper who recently complimented me on an article"

It has become a curious symbiosis, watching Chester at the weekend (20 games last season) and then spending large chunks of my leisure time pretending to manage them. In

of the players in real life. As such, I find it difficult to drop a goalkeeper who recently complimented me on an article, and likewise I am loathe to award the captaincy to a player



The team that's left Chester for dead.



We know it's not pretty, it's the game that counts.

that it isn't the best thing ever created (that's going to be *CM4*).

For starters, let's not fall into the usual idiotic criticism of saying it has no graphics and looks like a spreadsheet. There are more helpful and constructive points to be made.

Instead, let's start with the small matter of your opponents' super-goalkeepers. We're sure they're there to make scores realistic, but it's annoying to find that you can still have 23 shots on goal only for their keeper to have the match of his life and stop them all, while they need only a couple of shots to clinch victory. Another niggle is that working the transfer market is often more fun than playing the fixtures. The matches in *01/02* are slightly better, but they can still be a drag, specially when you're two seasons in and playing some lowly side. And this version has the added disadvantage of introducing the new transfer system, which makes every good player in the game demand a new, massively improved contract in the first few months of the season. Has that really been happening to such a great extent?

But let's not forget the biggest problem. *Champ Man* is not only an addiction, it's a sickness. You can waste valuable months of your life, feverishly playing into the small hours. The dependence is so bad that I've found myself not even enjoying it but still being unable to stop playing. This game promotes masochism!

So it's rubbish then. Now go away and let me get back to playing – I've got a big match coming up. My score? Fore once Steve Hill and I are in almost total agreement, but I might have shaved a single percentage point off.



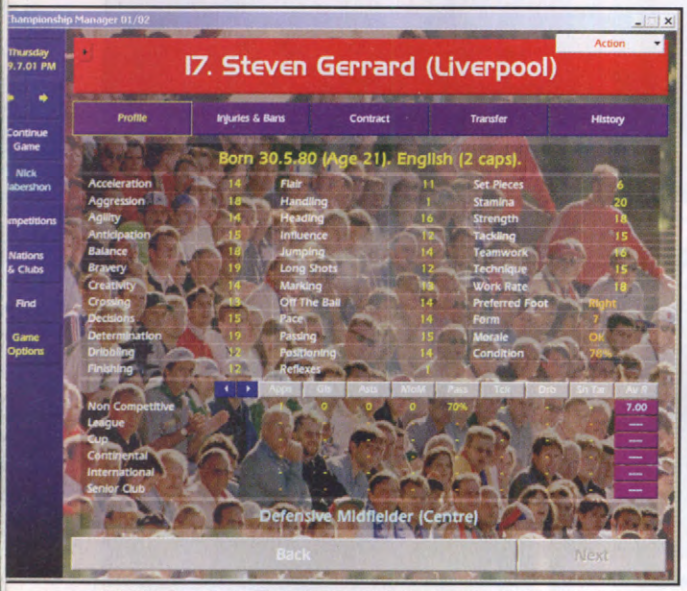
The tactics screen, where your basic style of play is arranged.



The old system was simpler.



It's all worth it in the end...



A 12 for longshots. They didn't watch the Germany Vs England game.

IN PERSPECTIVE

We've said it before and we'll say it again. When it comes to football management, *Championship Manager* is so far ahead of the field as to effectively be a different genre. Other games rely on graphics and gimmicks to provide some vague representation of the world of football, but none comes close to the number-crunching hardcore experience of the Champ.

Championship Manager

All other football management games

with whom I had a minor scuffle at the end-of-season party. I am quite possibly losing my mind.

But that's the power of the game, which can instil dedication almost on a par with real football. Naturally, its prime audience is football fans, as attested by the fact that I am writing these words in a hotel room in Munich the day before England's World Cup qualifier with Germany.

MORE MORE MORE

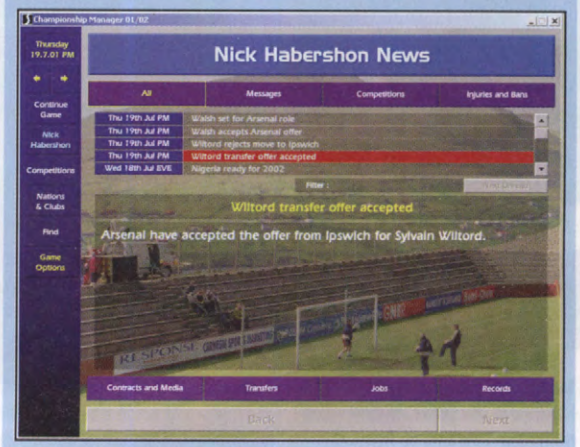
Anyway, to update or not to update? That's what you really want to know. If you've read this far, you're probably already a *CM* fan, but is it worth forking out another 25 quid (it seems they've decided not to lie about the price this year) for what is essentially the same game? It was hard to see what else could be added after last year's version, and many of the changes are simply functional, such as the ability to compare two players' attributes on the same screen or make notes within the game. There's also an option whereby attributes can be initially masked, putting more emphasis on scouting reports, and scouts can also be sent to analyse opponents.

I CAN HANDLE IT

More addictive than crack?

Much has been made of the addictiveness of *Championship Manager*, and it is usually covered in a fairly jovial fashion. Whereas drug addiction is considered a serious subject, virtual football management addiction has yet to really the headlines. But it is a genuine problem, and one that I have first-hand experience of. For me, playing *Championship Manager* is an extension of the misery endured supporting Chester City, and as such provides a series of lows tempered by very occasional highs. It is the quest for these highs that creates the addiction, which can manifest itself in ten-hour sessions peppered with violent mood swings.

I have realised that playing *Championship Manager* makes me an unpleasant person. I'm no charmer at the best of times, but in the midst of a heavy session am prone to snap at people and become involved in pointless arguments. If anyone phones me during a game, I can't wait to get rid of them and it can take several minutes to regain my concentration. Furthermore, sleeping patterns go out of the window, I begin to dress like Jeff Bridges' character in *The Big Lebowski*, and only stop playing to fashion a rudimentary meal, naturally eaten over the keyboard. So be warned, *Championship Manager* can screw you up.



Well, he was never that good was he?

Mainly though, it's about bringing it into line with the modern game, which can change considerably over the course of a year, in terms of personnel, wage structures or EU regulated transfer systems, for instance. To be honest, if the changes weren't there, nobody would really miss them, but having grown accustomed to them there is no going back, even if it's simply the fourth official indicating the amount of time added on.

Buying the new version of *Championship Manager* is the equivalent of buying a new team shirt, or perhaps a new season ticket. And the cost of the game will be more than covered by the amount of money you'll save sat at home on your copious arse.

AND ANOTHER THING

The game editor

It's all very well including an editor so you can modify stats and transfer players to the right clubs, but does it have to be such a lumbering beast of a programme? I still use the free editor that's been available on the Net for ages (the Tri Wasono one – dead simple and quick to use). The official one might be more powerful, but it takes an age to load and moving from player to club to staff is awkward and time-consuming. So there.



Pay the man, he's a living legend.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P233 with 64Mb RAM more like

PCZ VERDICT

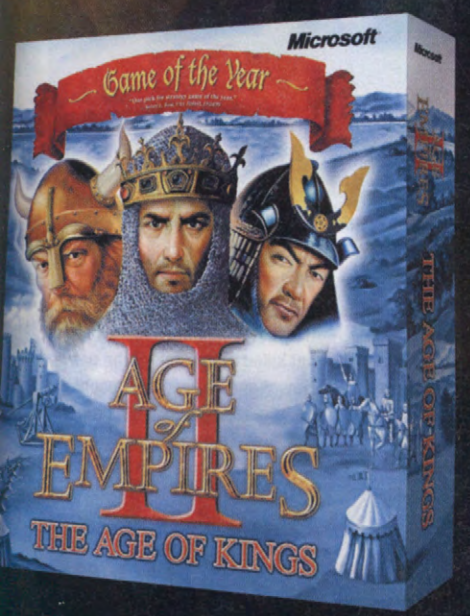
UPPERS Emphatic realism • Enormous database • Hugely involving and addictive

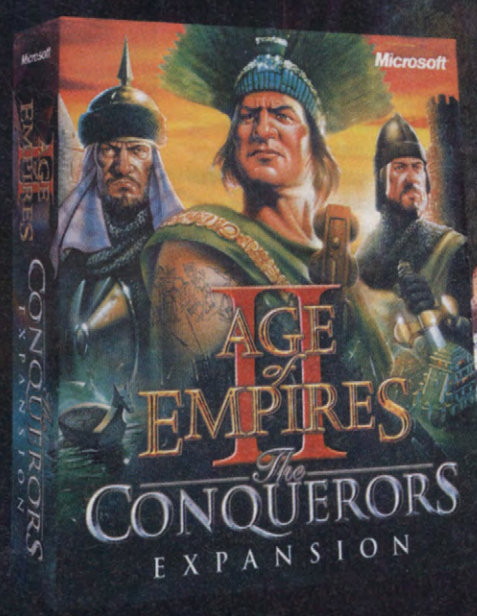
DOWNERS Ruins your life

92 The king of kings

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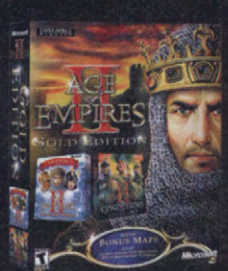
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ENSEMBLE STUDIOS

Microsoft

www.age2gold.co.uk



Explosions like this look nice but will slow down the game if you don't have enough RAM.



While most levels start quietly, they all tend to end up a bit like this.

MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC

£34.99 • Virgin Interactive• Out now

It's been a long time coming, but was it worth the wait? We don't know, but *Chris Anderson* does

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Magic & Mayhem, it has to be said, was one of the last games to dump flashy graphics in favour of good old-fashioned gameplay. Cleverly designed levels and tricky puzzles went hand in hand to produce a gameplay experience which was simple yet somehow hugely addictive. You would imagine then, that any follow-up to such a game would be more of the same, with knobs on. That's what you get with *Art Of Magic* up to a point, although there are noticeable differences. The artwork is a lot more detailed, the graphics are 'proper' 3D, and a new, more ominous music track has replaced the atmospheric yet slightly repetitive score in the first game. The 3D camera is a cinch to use and comes in very handy for spotting those health items and other goodies that are lying around the levels. In short, *Art Of Magic* is a hell of a lot more polished than *Magic & Mayhem*.



New characters, but gameplay hasn't changed much from the original.

I AM KING OF GOBLINS

There's obviously a new, if spectacularly unoriginal plot. The Lord Of Chaos has supposedly invaded the land after some do-gooder pops his clogs disturbing the balance of the realms. You play the part of Aurax (yes, that's his name), who sees his father get killed at the start of the game (yawn) and vows to beat people up from there on in in the name of justice. To make things even worse for old Aurax, an evil wizard kidnaps his sister early in the game and runs off to God knows where, leaving Aurax to plod through the realms looking for her. So begins another battle against the evil ones then. It has to be said that the cut-scenes that develop the plot (using the in-



A fire-breathing dragon. Why did I know one of these was going to show up?



Blood. Everywhere. That'll be *Art Of Magic* then.



Places of power like this one are hotly contested, and are where games are won or lost.

game engine) are fairly polished and blend seamlessly with the actual game, which goes some way to making up for the yawnsome storyline.

The entire game, as was the case with the original, revolves around capturing and keeping control of places of power. Places of power that come under your control increase the rate at which you regain mana, which, as any pointy-hatted veteran will attest, is essential for casting spells. There are a set amount of places of power in each level, and more often than not there is an adversary running round the place trying to capture them before you do. In this sense, it's not entirely dissimilar to a real-time strategy game, with both sides building up their units (creatures in this case) and amassing a huge army as quickly as possible, before wading into the opposition. Many of the levels can often be cat-and-mouse affairs with both sides holding equal amounts of places of power, resulting in you and the enemy wizard running all over the place recapturing places you just lost. This can be frustrating. Your creatures are generally not very strong, so even if you have a lot of them you can't kill off the enemy. Most levels are won by simply grabbing as many places of power as possible, luring the enemy wizard to you while you're standing on one of them (mana comes back faster when you stand on a place of power) and blasting the hell out of your foe while he's distracted by your minions. You have to kill them off in one attempt because they regenerate health at a ridiculous rate, and some of them have healing spells too, so weakening them and running off to bring your mana back to full before finishing them off is never an option.

"Most levels are won by simply grabbing as many places of power as possible"



Somebody please tell them they can't all cross the bridge at once.

SPELLBOUND

Wave your wand in wonder...

The Portmanteau is basically your spell book. Spell ingredients can be dropped onto the talismans below, and depending which talisman you drop them onto, they make different spells. A wide selection of spells quickly becomes available reasonably early in the game, and before every level you need to decide which ones to bring with you. Obviously, no self-respecting wizard would go anywhere without a healing spell. You'd better bring one of those then, and at least one attack spell, and of course at least one creature-creating spell. Without one of each of these, you will soon become an ex-wizard. Trust me, been there done it.



Later in the game you'll have more spells than you can use.

I WALK IN DARK SHADOWS

Not all of the levels involve killing things. There are many levels that involve sneaking around unseen, or even morphing into different creatures so you can move around unnoticed and get an object essential for your level objective. These levels tend to be trial-and-error affairs in which you move around the map (pressing fast-save every now and then) to get used to the layout of the mission and then, when you know where everything is, going through the motions to get hold of the object. Yes, these levels are as boring as they sound, and the game would have been a sight better if they had been left out, but you can't just skip them since completing one level opens up somewhere new on the world map, so you have to do every level to advance.

Art Of Magic is not going to win any awards for originality. It's a highly playable game, but it can be a bit repetitive after extended play. Having Said that, it's an improvement in terms of presentation over the original title, and the gameplay that made the first game so addictive is still soundly in place. No classic then, but definitely worth a look, particularly if you haven't played the original. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** Pentium II 300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** You'll be needing at least 128 Mb RAM

IN PERSPECTIVE

Yes, we know the first game got a Classic label when it was released. Well a lot's happened since then, and it doesn't stand out from the crowd the way it used to. And anyway, they're both pretty much the same game. So there.

The Art Of Magic

Magic & Mayhem

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Nice graphics • Useful 3D camera enables you to get to any part of the action quickly • Impressive cut-scenes

DOWNERS Repetitive after extended play • Cheesy voice-overs • Not remarkably different to the original

80 Highly playable, if not hugely original

THRONE OF DARKNESSS

£34.99 • Vivendi • Out now

We managed to prise *Rhianna Pratchett* off *Diablo II* long enough for her to try some Japanese-style destruction


Damn. That's another pair of pants ruined.

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

I'll admit I've never wholeheartedly embraced Japanese culture. The films perplex me and if I wanted to eat raw fish I'd run through the penguin pen at London Zoo with my mouth open. Besides, it tastes like eating your own tongue. But before you could say 'konnichiwa', *Throne Of Darkness* converted me. With its bloody and beautiful depiction of Japanese mythology and a unique take on the isometric hack 'n' slash, it's in some ways – and this is me saying this here – even better than *Diablo II*. (Although its resemblance to *Diablo* is not just cosmetic, as it was created in part by members of the original *Diablo* team.)

The setting of the game revolves around the country's ruling Warlord, who has turned to evil in a most blood-curdling manner, which could only have been dreamt up during those sake-filled nights of old. Now seven samurai from one of the four remaining clans, must unite to destroy the Warlord and his armies of the exceptionally bad-tempered.

Although you can play with all seven characters, you can only use four at a time. The remaining three rest their tootsies and regain health and ki (the equivalent of mana) with the Damiyo, your leader and regenerative ki powerhouse. Swapping between samurai is just a quick point-and-click operation, and your Damiyo has the power not only to heal but also resurrects any fallen samurai, at a ki cost.



It's all about good teamwork.

"This isn't one of those RPG parties where you find romance among the elves, or one that gives a damn about your inner turmoils"

THE WAY OF THE SWORD

This makes for a rather unique style of gameplay, as you juggle your characters to meet the needs of a particular battle. One of the most interesting aspects of the game is the 12 pre-set strategical patterns which can be adapted to meet your gaming style. The patterns will define the combat nature of each character: defensive, neutral or aggressive, their preferred weapon and spell usage. You control one samurai, while the computer AI follows your pattern instructions and takes care of the rest – and for the most part does a pretty good job.

This isn't one of those RPG parties where you find romance among the elves, or one that gives a damn about your inner turmoils. It's all about getting in there and getting the job done. Devising strategies may seem like a bit of a headache to start with, but once you get the knack it's lots of fun as well as being incredibly effective, especially when you devise a strategy that effortlessly

WALKTHROUGH

END

DIY

***Throne Of Darkness* enables, nay positively encourages you to customise the items you find scattered around the place**


1 Most items can be customised by inserting magical items found throughout the game (blood, pearls, jewels and so on) into the slots found on the item.


2 Give the blacksmith the item that you wish to craft and fill up any number of the slots you want to – you can always add more later.


3 Go for items of the same element if you want to get more benefits in that area, although you'll never really know what to expect until it's made!


4 Use your samurai with the highest charisma to strike a deal. The blacksmith does his thing and hey presto – your own crafted item.

takes down a load of previously troublesome beasties.

Graphically *ToD* looks pretty sharp, the inside settings are of the period and the outside ones are at times so beautiful you just want to sit down beneath a cherry tree and compose a postcard. 'Dear Mum and Dad. Greetings from feudal Japan. Killed a naked spiderwoman today. Saw someone flayed alive. Wish you were here.' Well, it seems pretty, until you notice that everywhere you go there are impaled bodies, rotting corpses and a healthy amount of painting with entrails. Combat is broken up by Japanese animé-style FMVs, which are incredibly slick, as is the depiction and movement of your samurai. It's like watching your own mini-martial arts film.


Lighting bolts, don't you just love 'em

ZEN AND THE ART OF RECYCLING

Thankfully there are no perpetual returns to town to get healing and sell your weapons as you have a permanent telepathic link to the priest and blacksmith. In the spirit of eco-friendliness you don't sell your weapons, you recycle them, by donating your junk to the blacksmith who will turn them into something you might actually need. The priest does the usual identifying and selling of potions, and also provides a link to the ruling four elemental gods who distribute spell points to those who donate the most stuff to them.

ToD creates an intense single-player experience and the multiplayer component within the game (which I doubt will be quite as popular online as *Diablo II* although it may achieve some sort of 'cult' status) is based on a king-of-the-hill-style gameplay. Eight people assume the roles of the Dark Warlord and the four clans and fight it out. When the Dark Warlord is knocked off his throne the victorious player becomes the Dark Warlord and it begins again.


Watch out for the wolf clan. Rabid wolves spring from their corpses.

"Well, it seems pretty, until you notice that everywhere you go there are impaled bodies, rotting corpses and a healthy amount of painting with entrails"

The marketing spiel of it being '*Diablo* with samurai' doesn't really do *ToD* justice. It may have *Diablo* parenting, but the initial learning curve is much steeper. You need a more strategical outlook towards combat and in part a *Baldur's Gate* mentality to cope with the amount of inventory shuffling involved. If you're a *Diablo* devotee then *ToD* will offer you more of an opportunity to think about the kind of carnage you wish to bestow before you bestow it, while more traditional RPGers will relish the beautifully played-out Japanese mythology. There's something for everyone and now I'm off to deprive some penguins of their dinner. PM


There's lots of hidden caves to get lost in.

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you're into all-out action and carnage then the combination of *Diablo II* and its expansion pack *Lord Of Destruction* is well worth a look. For a slower pace try the excellent *Baldur's Gate II*.

Throne Of Darkness

Diablo II

Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction

Baldur's Gate II

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P266 **Memory** 32 Mb RAM and 64Mb for multiplayer **ALSO REQUIRES** 4 x CD ROM, 700Mb hard drive space **WE SAY** Go for a PIII with 128Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Innovative gameplay • A genuinely strategical role-player • Unique look

DOWNERS • Loads of inventory shuffling • Steep initial learning curve

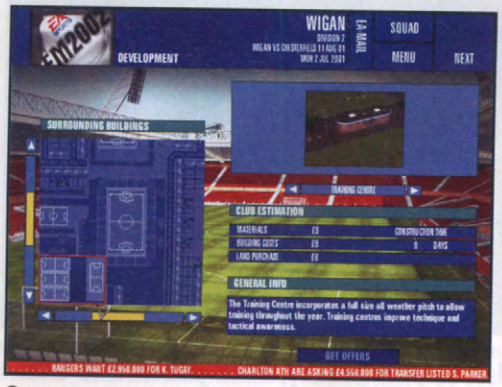
88 Turning Japanese



For some reason most of my stars spent the season injured. A bug or just bad luck?



The player search engine hasn't been enhanced much, and is still quite frustrating to use.



Yep, you still have to build a training ground no matter where you are.



The 3D engine has undergone some tweaks but it's still pretty rubbish.



At least you can change all the player details with the game editor. A lot of work considering the base data.

FA PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGER 2002

£34.99 • EA • Out now

Another footie season, another challenger condemned to mid-table mediocrity. *Mark Hill* shrugs his shoulders in indifference

It's become customary to dismiss every football management game as a worthless contender to the crown so steadfastly held by *Championship Manager*. And with good reason; *CM* is a realistic simulation of the football world you can lose every waking moment to playing. For once, let's admit right at the start that *FA Manager 2002* can never come close, and analyse it not as a *CM* challenger but as a computer game loosely based on the world of football. It's no use complaining that it isn't realistic, that player valuations and their stats bear only a passing resemblance to reality, that it feels too cartoony. As an undemanding game of fantasy football, the *FA Manager* series is probably the best option available at the moment.

SLICK AND SLIM

FA Manager 2002 is pretty much an enhanced and updated version of last year's release and, for those who don't know, is the kind of management game where you have to build training grounds before your players can train and surgeries before they can be healed. Its biggest selling point though, is that it features 3D matches, which is what all the *Champ Man* critics want. Being an EA title, it oozes quality of presentation and the kind of slickness you associate with *FIFA* titles. The colours are easy on the eye, and most screens can be found effortlessly in the drop-down menus. Among the improvements in this version are the training, which is now much more comprehensive, and lots of interface tweaks, including shortcuts to the most used screens and a scrolling bar at the bottom of the screen which keeps you up to date on transfers in true *Sky Sports Live* fashion.

> **"The AI is still not much better, and players run around in a parody of football"**

PRETTY UGLY

Perhaps the biggest improvement on last year is the new Fastview match mode, which is a more colourful version of the *Champ Man* text-based match engine. It's nowhere near as involving, but it sure beats the still dreadful 3D matches. These continue to use the STARS engine and consequently look grainy and low-res. The AI is still not much better, and players run around in a parody of football, shattering any illusions you might have had beforehand that this has anything to do with the real thing. As I said before though, you'll play this kind of game if you want something that's not too involving, where you can spend more time improving the stadium than tweaking tactics, and bring big stars to your small club. If you want the real thing, you know where to go. (*Page 62 –Ed.*) PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

You want some perspective? You can't handle perspective. Anyway, it's either this or *Champ Man*.

Championship Manager 01/02

FA Manager 2002

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P350 with 64Mb and a decent 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Very slick presentation • You can play a season in an afternoon • Not too taxing

DOWNERS 3D matches still awful • Annoying player search engine • Only fun in short bursts

61 It's only a game

Conquer. Expand. UNITE.



Lord Takeda,

In this year of 1542 Civil War has erupted in Japan. Feudalism has arrived, turning neighboring clans into bitter rivals. Now you must enter the fray, my Lord, and command your armies with careful strategy. Through bravery, honor, and might you may someday re-unite Japan, and bring peace to our people.



Use each unit wisely, my Lord.



The swordsman is the brunt of your forces, lethal in close combat to all but the calvary.



Spearmen are the farmers, the tradesmen, the very essence of your people. Their defensive skills are strong like their heart.



The archer is like the bee, his sting is strong, but he cannot withstand the fist. With proper defense he is deadly.



The rifle is new to this land, and rare. If you can aquire this technology, the strongest of samurai can be cut down.



Calvary are your bravest of samurai mounted on beasts of war. If used wisely they can overcome any force.

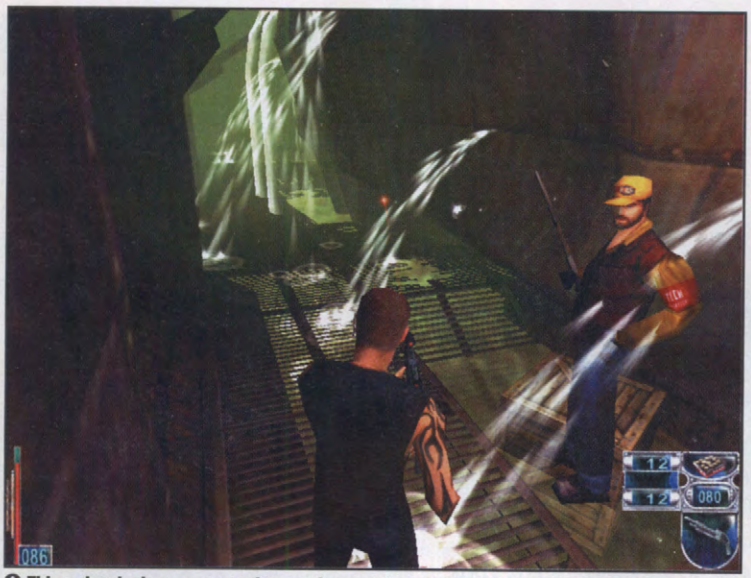
- Lead the armies of clan Takeda against the fuedal Lords.
- Deploy your troops wisely, for enemy Diaymo are cunning.
- Campaign to unite Japan or face off over LAN/Internet.
- Storm castles, scale mountains or ravage battlefields in the ultimate strategic war game.



TAKEDA

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This redneck chap accompanies you for a while, and I don't mean on his banjo.



All of a sudden Stringfellows doesn't seem quite so bad.

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

£29.99 • Cryo • Out now

Attention PC lovers. This is a PC blow-out. *Anthony Holden*'s got white PC, black PC, smelly PC, snappin' PC...

In simpler times, all you had to worry about when confronted with a minor film-licensed game was the likelihood that it was a soulless, formula-driven cash-in, probably a generic shooter, probably complete nob. While those golden days are behind us, the bigger worry these days is that the developers will get the whole 'film' thing into their heads and take a crack at that nemesis of decent gameplay, the interactive movie. In a heart-stopping twist, *From Dusk Till Dawn* has managed to tread a tightrope between the two. Crushing linearity and an insane preponderance of intrusive cut-scenes betray an overzealous cinematisation, while poor production values and uninspired gameplay hark back to a more traditional paradigm.

Let's face it though, the odds were against this one from the start. It's French, it's a low-budget first/third-person shooter, and its biggest claim to fame is that Hubert (*Alone In The Dark*) Chardot penned the script – which is passably generic at best. It also has possibly the weakest licence of all time – a five-year-old film, with a bizarre plot that lends itself to a computer game about as well as a teary cabaret musical, and no access to likenesses of the key actors.

Developer Gamesquad has thus opted to make its game a loose sequel that bears very little resemblance to the source material. You play as Seth Gecko, looking enough like George Clooney to maintain the connection without attracting any unwanted legal attention. It's five years after the film and you've been locked up on a prison tanker, but you get a chance at freedom when a group of vampires touch down and start to infect everyone on the ship. With a wooden stake strapped to your wrist and an increasingly lethal selection of projectile weapons at your side, your imperative is to save your sorry ass and get to the chopper.

"You are joined by a number of friendly NPCs who join you in firing holy vengeance from the barrel of a shotgun"

Not everyone on board is infected though, and this is where the game displays some determination to drag itself out of crippling mediocrity. As you make your way through the ship, cutting a bloody swathe through hordes of the undead, you are joined by a number of friendly NPCs. They either join you in firing holy vengeance from the barrel of a shotgun, or shuffle along uselessly in the hope that you'll protect them. Either way, their presence adds some welcome variety to the proceedings. As an added factor, you are often joined by characters who look identical to their newly undead workmates, leading to confusion and frequent friendly-fire fatalities. Annoying, but somehow quite realistic.

Beyond this, the game is a straight shooter with a vampire theme. Some of the weapons, such as the holy water crossbow, are interesting, if largely useless, but the survival horror elements we expected did not eventuate. The AI is generally OK, though friendlies do tend to get stuck on each other where their path-finding intersects, occasionally forcing a restart. There are also some supremely maddening moments when you open a door and get a grenade in the face, with no chance of survival unless you knew it was coming.

What you're left with is a fairly standard B-grade action game with inadequate graphics and an over-emphasis on plot-building, and little hope of reanimating an already feeble licence. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

For third-person shooting, you can't go past *Max Payne*. For cinematic action, Solid Snake's your guy, and for horror thematics you've got your Ed Carnby. Seth Gecko's a poor substitute for any of them.

Max Payne

Metal Gear Solid

AITD: The New Nightmare

From Dusk Till Dawn

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII300 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PII450 with 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Some interesting weapons • Co-operative NPCs • Half-decent plot

DOWNERS Too many crap cut-scenes • Dated graphics • Jerky animation • Annoying unavoidable deaths

58 B-grade fare at best



In a nice twist, finishing off vampires with your stake also nets you 20% health.



Many enemies are invulnerable but for one weak point.

ballistics

the fastest game on earth



OPTIMIZED FOR THE nVIDIA. GeForce3

Ballistics is compatible with all video cards

"Maximizing the use of the GeForce3™ card, GRIN has created a game that is furiously fast and sweet to your eyes." -NVIDIA.COM

The fastest game on earth is coming to your PC this autumn. Ballistics is a heart-pounding, non-stop adrenaline ride through a futuristic world of Formula-One racers gone bad. Race against up to 8 opponents in GeForce 3 enhanced levels that will blow you away. Achieve insane G-Forces travelling at twice the speed of sound. With full vertex shading and bump mapping, Ballistics brings some of the most impressive visuals seen on a PC to date. Get into the race, go Ballistic.

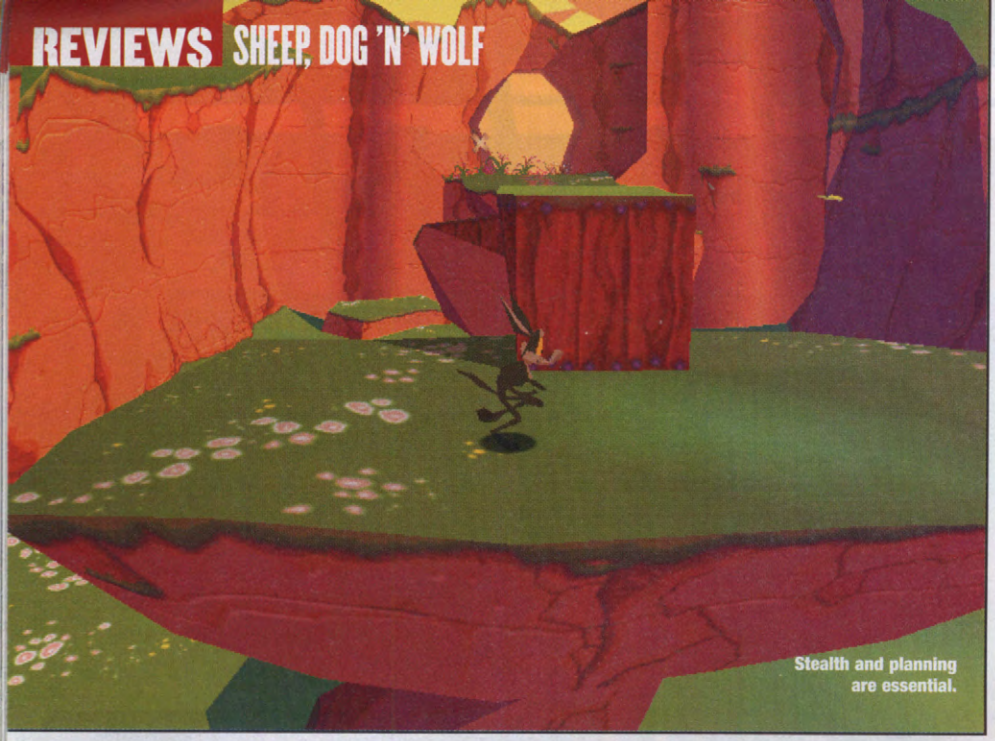
SPEED KILLS

XICAT INTERACTIVE

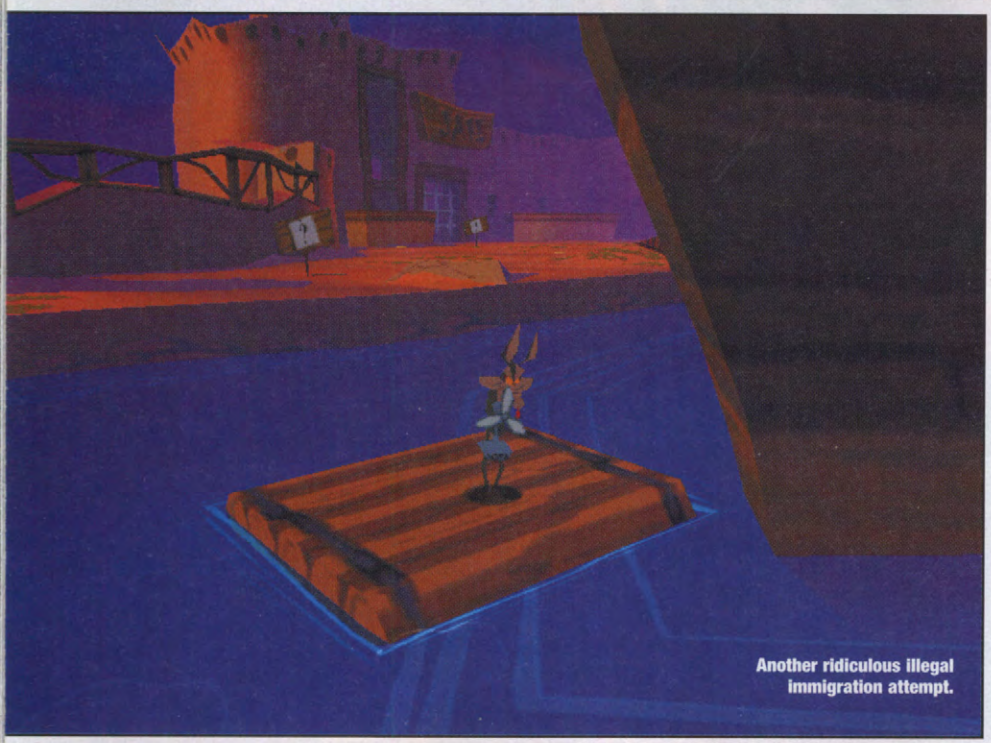
GRIN

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Stealth and planning are essential.



Another ridiculous illegal immigration attempt.



Run, run like the wind.

SHEEP, DOG

£19.99 • Infogrames • Out now

As the only member of the team who looks anything close to animated, here's *James Lyon* with another review

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

It's certainly not the first time the Warner Brothers 'it's over 50 years old but we're never letting go' cartoon franchise has wriggled its way into the gaming world, usually pupating into some kind of over-easy platform game with only the characters' reputations offering any kind of purchasing incentive. But what's new about that, eh? More of the same here, then, but this time… this time…

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

And what's happened to everybody's voice? The original artists may be dead, but these pale excuses for imitations seem to offer all the panache and feeling of a school play rehearsal. Thank goodness none of the lead characters speak or we'd be howling at the moon in protest right now. And let's not mention the music. No, let's do mention the music. Imagine if all that classical orchestral music (and established sound effects) that fit the cartoon so well had been rammed in the aural bin and been replaced with some horrifically muted easy listening jazz that rips the soul out of a potential classic. Well imagine no more: just buy the game.

"What's happened to everybody's voice? These pale imitations offer all the panache and feeling of a school play rehearsal"

Let's concentrate on looks first. It's obvious that cel-shading, (a graphics feature pioneered by *Jet Set Radio*, that seems to be spawning rapidly into almost every 3D cartoon platform game) has been used extensively here, although to be honest, I can't really tell if it makes that much of a difference in portraying the 2D visuals in 3D effect. It helps, sure, but away from the inimitable graffiti-daubed stylistics of *Jet Set Radio* it often feels too overstated. Especially when you think that it's been taken from an actual cartoon that didn't need to draw big black lines around characters to make them look 'authentic'. (It's true, animation fans – I remember them doing this in an early episode of *Taz-mania* and the effect looked distinctly off-putting.)

However, these stuttering attempts to move into 3D show that the technique is a long way from perfection. It's natural that, with current technology, it can't compete frame for frame. Admittedly, the backgrounds look splendid and capture the Looney Tunes spirit well enough but, then, some of the characters look like they've just won a first-class cruise on the *SS Fist*. The worst victim of this evidently being Daffy Duck, whose familiar features have been bent wholly out of shape as he gains this other dimension.

But, y'know, playing it for a while, I found most of these presentation faults got gently pushed aside – except for the music: that's unforgivable – and I found myself beginning to appreciate the game's structure



'N' WOLF

and content. And moan about that instead…

SURELY NOT? LOOK AT THE SCORE

There are only 17 levels to go through, which means it's all over in a few days. There are two secret levels, but don't be fooled as they're counted as part of the overall goal and it's easy to find them once you've got a few bonus points. These bonus points come in the form of hidden time clocks on each level – the points traded in for access to things like artwork, storyboards and behind-the-scenes info. Not much of a reward but one that expands the game's longevity a tiny bit further, since, rest assured it needs it. But ignoring the shortness of the game for now, let's concentrate on level design because that's where the final score draws most of its points.

IN PERSPECTIVE

It's *Metal Gear Solid* with sheep. And that was quite short, too. *The Gift* proves that Europeans are good at making decently above-average platform games with god-awful soundtracks.

Sheep, Dog 'N' Wolf

Metal Gear Solid

The Gift

Indeed, attempting to steal a sheep from the watchful gaze of Sam Sheepdog isn't even the half of it, as you first have to reach the herd, not to mention getting back to the goal as well. While levels seem large at first, you're really confined to a set linear path, gradually solving one puzzle after another. You can easily take each level and divide it into different sections, where the key to progress is confined to a small area. This is generally proven by the fact that, if you get caught, instead of losing a life or going right back to the start, you'll be placed at the set-up stage of the current puzzle you've been working on. On a higher level, the illusory hub structure belies the fact that levels can only be completed consecutively.

It's probably this aspect that makes the game easier than it should be, but, then, it helps to reduce frustration down from a gah! to a nngh! level. It's possible to not so much breeze, as lightly gust through the missions, it being less about action and more about 3D object manipulation for the most part. That is, until you get to the horror that is level ten and the mid-game 'boss', a section that calls for some tricky manoeuvres to be performed three times while avoiding the clutches of a big red hairy monster. It seemed to take me about the same time getting past that as it did playing through the whole of the previous levels. Anyone else who manages to do that section without falling into the lava more than 20 times without any foreknowledge of what to do deserves to have their name written on a plaque.

What – and here's where it gets really positive – makes the game better than it should be, though, is that a true effort has been made to make sure it never gets too repetitive. The new objects or obstacle introduced every level ups the enjoyment considerably, as you're eager to figure out what they do and what you're going to get next. It's all your standard Acme products, but designed so as to actually slot seamlessly into the puzzles and integrate themselves with less incongruity than would be expected when trying to capture the more warped aspects of a classic Warner Brothers cartoon.

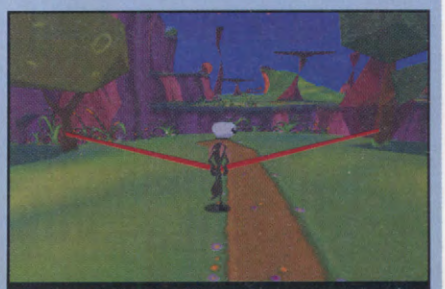
WELCOME TO THE ACME STORE

Here, sheepy, sheep, sheepy, sheepy…

What can we expect in the way of gadgets then? Picking stuff out of the range randomly, there's a strap-on rocket that sees you careering about the skies with all the grace and poise of a drunk elephant. Seesaws are usually used to propel hapless sheep across the map with the aid of huge boulders, while giant elastic bands are used as either catapults or precariously unsafe bungee ropes. And… lettuce? Used to attract hungry sheep into your clutches. Ignore the stealth bushes, though. They're usually about as much use as a quid in a London coffee shop.



The rocket pack will have you careering around the sky.



Giant elastic bands will propel you over huge distances.

TRIANGLE, SQUARE, CIRCLE, ALT

It's an arcade game first and foremost of course and has a real arcadey feel to it. Fortunately, it's easy to control with the keyboard. The game calls for precision jumping a few times, however, the slower nature of the game and the close restart points make it less of a chore. The camera, – the bane of any 3D platform game – while not perfect, performs adequately, adjusting itself for the best possible view and only occasionally gets stuck on scenery when it was essential to maintain an ideal view.

To sum up, it's alternates between long lengths of easiness and short periods of ire-inducing frustration. Then it's all over just as you're getting into it. Nevertheless, the non-repetitive nature and puzzles make it fun to get through and one I found myself enjoying. Not a Classic but one of the best attempts I've seen at capturing the spirit of Looney Tunes in gaming. Except for the music. God that music… PCZ

TECH SPECS

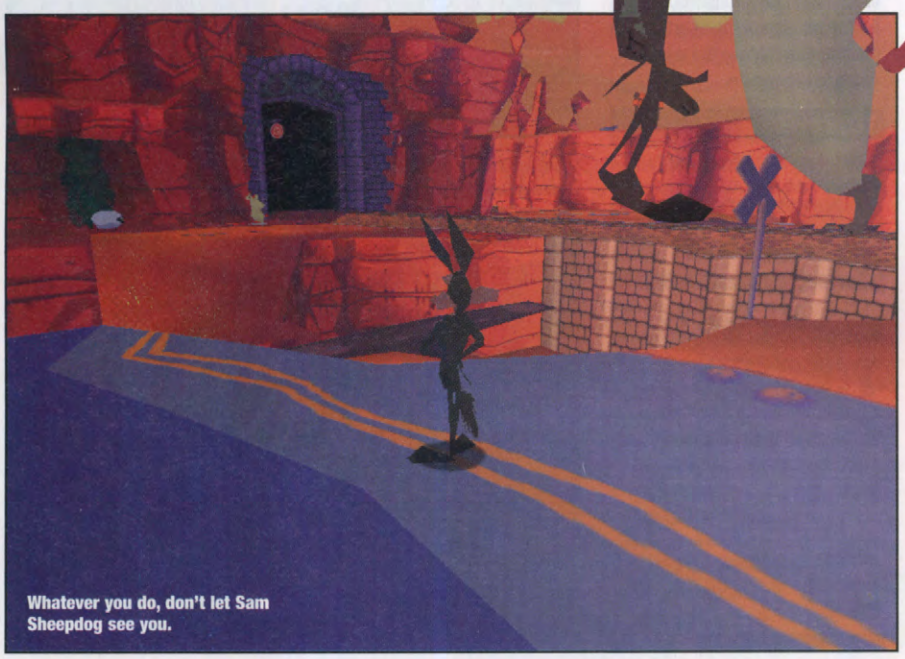
MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Not too bad if you ramp down the detail

PCZ VERDICT

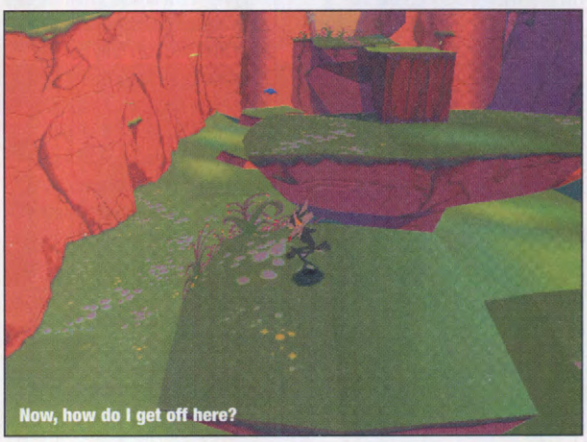
UPPERS Pleasant scenery • Good degree of variation • Never insultingly easy

DOWNERS Too short • Funny-looking characters • Piss-poor music

80 **A highly entertaining if overly short puzzle game**



Whatever you do, don't let Sam Sheepdog see you.



Now, how do I get off here?

SKI-DOO X TEAM RACING

£19.99 • The Learning Company • Out now

***James Lyon* goes ski-dooing. Or something**



Mind that circular picture.


Last again and it's only the start.

Despite cashing in on the current extreme sports phenomenon, ski-doo…(ing?) is hardly spurting up the cliff face of pulse-pounding, limb-shattering media entertainment.

In fact, it's more likely to be found sandwiched in the pre-dawn Channel 5 schedule between Extreme Ludo and Ultimate Power Fly Fishing. Still, it's a moderately good idea for a game. And it saves a fortune on coloured paint.

There are 15 courses on offer, with half unlocked only after winning the increasingly difficult championships. Which leads us quickly on to highlight the game's main failing: that being, it's only possible to save after winning every second race. Fine on the easy courses, but having just scraped a decent win on a later course, losing on the next and having to do the first again can prove dispiriting. It's slight, but couple this with exponentially harder races and opponents as well as no continues and it's either a commendable extension of game length or arse, depending on your point of view.

Having never ridden a snowmobile before, I'm not entirely qualified to comment on how realistic the handling is, but if it means jerking wildly after every minor bump it does its job well. Just a few mistakes can see you relegated to the back of the pack very quickly. It doesn't help, though, when the dubious replacement system often places you off the course in deep snow, and in front of an obstacle, as it's wont to do.

Nevertheless, driver AI is surprisingly commendable. The other riders don't all follow a pretentiously perfect racing line and often attempt to take the type of shortcuts and risky jumps the player would, resulting in them tumbling crack-necked into the packed snow.


"Damn, forgot the sandwiches."

It's nothing special and the lacklustre game structure and graphics don't do it any favours, nevertheless it's competently entertaining and that's that.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 400MHz **Memory** 64Mb RAM, 150Mb hard disk space, 3D card **WE SAY** Anything higher for better detail

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Entertaining enough

DOWNERS Mediocre graphics • Tricky handling • Second-rate skate-punk music

64 **Categorically, the best ski-doo game the PC has ever seen!**

MADDEN NFL 2002

£29.99 • EA Sports • Out September 21

***Steve Hill* slips on the shoulder pads and buffs his helmet**

American sports. Loathe them or hate them, we can't understand them. Football, as they ludicrously insist on calling it, might seem reasonably simple. Heavily padded brick shithouses attempt to propel an egg-shaped ball from one end of a field to the other. However, closer inspection reveals a bewildering world of incomprehensible formations and tactics. Thankfully, veteran coach John Madden is on hand to provide a few pointers.

With the ball at your disposal, and faced with an array of elaborate configurations, the only real option is to 'ask Madden,' whereby your players will line up according to his selection. The rest is up to you. Depending on how many yards you have to go, you can either bum-rush the line, or use your quarterback to try and hit one of your wide receivers.


That clears that up then.

When it comes to defence, however, it's a whole different ball game. No help is offered, and given that you can only control one player at a time, there's not really a great deal you can actually do. In fact, for all the difference it makes, at this point you might as well do something useful like flick through Teletext or put the kettle on. In fact, defending is so tedious that you're almost tempted to let the other team score simply so you can have the ball back.

The bottom line is that American Football doesn't make for a particularly great game. And while *Madden* is undeniably a technically accomplished representation of the sport, it's also one that we are never going to play again.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 333 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** PIII 600 128Mb RAM 16Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

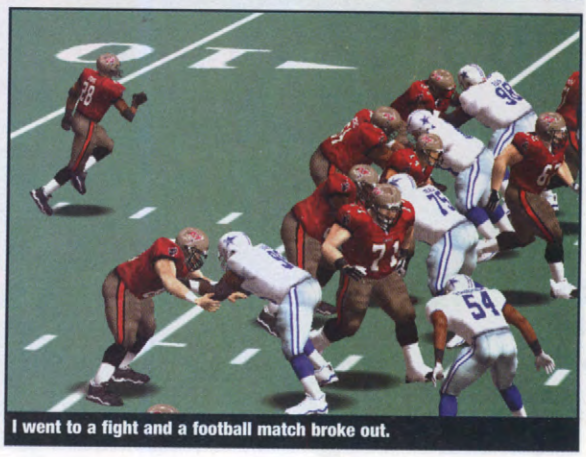
UPPERS Immaculate presentation • Emphatic realism • Superb replays

DOWNERS No more than an annual update • Defending is virtually non-interactive • The stop-start nature of the sport • Ill-advised 'Madden Rap'

55 **Maddening**



That's a decent kick for a one-legged man.


I went to a fight and a football match broke out.

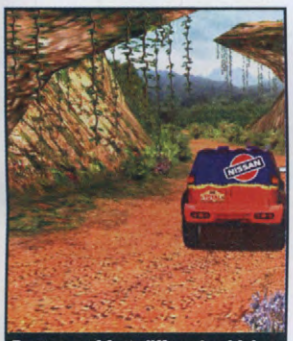
PARIS – DAKAR RALLY

£29.99 • Acclaim • Out now

Martin Korda climbs into the driver's seat

Take a look at the system requirements for this game. Now take a look at the graphics. Now stop laughing, because they are actually the right ones. Add to these bland visuals a feeble licence that no one cares about, apart from about three people, and you're left with yet another sub-standard and mind-liquifyingly dull arcade racing game that only about two people will care about.

But fortunately, it's not all bad. You get to race one of four (yes count 'em, four) different vehicles around the drab, near identical-looking tracks, each of which has a selection of varying-quality alternatives which are unlocked as you master certain stages. While hardly accurate, at least a token effort has been made to give each one (a 4x4, motorbike, buggy and quad bike) separate handling, and your co-pilot's (space permitting) directions are vaguely accurate if often incomprehensible.



Race one of four different vehicles.

Before each race, you get to customise your car, with suspension, shocks, ride height, gearbox and tyre pressure all tweakable, although your choices for each are kept to a bare minimum. Once you've messed around with your car set up, navigated your way through the clumsy menus and switched off the irritating music and actually started racing, you soon realise just how basic the whole thing is. Much of the scenery is in 2D, while the backdrops make the dirt tracks you're racing on look visually stimulating. There's very little variation, very little entertainment and very little to get excited about, but at least you can console yourself with the fact that it'll take you a fair while before you've cracked it, and the fact that there are four vehicle types to master, which is more than can be said for the majority of PC-based arcade racers.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 450Mhz **Memory** 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** A PIII 600, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Relatively challenging • Four vehicle types to master

DOWNERS Graphics are dull • Repetitive gameplay • Irritating music • Clumsy menus

55 Dull but challenging



330th. It could have been worse.



The graphics hardly warrant such a high minimum spec.

ZAX THE ALIEN HUNTER

£29.99 • JoWood • Out now

I'm Zax. I shoot aliens in the face. _James Lyon_ came to review my game. And when they met, it was moida!

Even after giving a high mark to a game that lasts less than a week (see page 74), I'm all for length in games, but then, there are those which, for reasons that will become clear, seem too long. Like the last guest to leave the party, they sit there, eating the remains of the peanuts, droning on and on, showing no signs of stopping anytime soon. Thing is, it's not like they're really terrible. If anything, it's the opposite. They're too nice, too polite; not doing anybody any serious harm, not vomiting on the chaise longue or feeling up the hostess. But neither do they come out with anything scintillating that makes everybody sit up and applaud them. They just sit there as you weep bitter salty tears and agonisingly slowly, slowly come to the distant conclusion of a bland anecdote they took three years (so they say) to think up.

The game? A top-down shooter, you moving one way, your mouse aiming and firing independently. Blast effects seem weedy and your aim always feels slightly off. There's no real tension. Energy and ammo are picked up from fallen enemies, and it's more a case of wade in, hit, and hope you can get stocked up before they break through your shield.

Tasks involve finding objects by pushing levers and shooting anything that moves. You collect ore and crystals to power your equipment by destroying pots and crates. The scenery and weapons change but it's all mostly the same. And it does it so inoffensively it marks its own downfall into mediocrity. Final evidence: the plot sees you shipwrecked on another planet whose inhabitants have been praying for a saviour to defeat an oppressive alien force. Enough said.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233Mhz **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A PIII for decent play

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Engine aside, nothing intrinsically wrong…

DOWNERS …but it's not anything special either

47 Looks like a ten-year-old game


I give this lava molten out of ten.


Shoot consoles to stop clone pads. A nice touch.



PC CD-ROM

PlayStation.2

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EYES NARROW WITH FOCUSED DESIRE AS YOU BEAR DOWN ON THE PACK.

DANGER MOCKING YOU IN YOUR WING MIRRORS.

AND DEFEAT'S HOT BREATH ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK.

LOCK HORNS WITH THE FASTEST MEN ON EARTH.







EA SPORTS

it's in the game.

easports.com

BUDGET ZONE

Time to stick a magnet down the back of the sofa...

BARGAIN HUNTERS Rhianna Pratchett and Martin Korda

HALF-LIFE

BEST BUY

Best Seller Series • £9.99 • Out now

Having their game dubbed 'Better than *Half-Life*' is the kind of accolade every developer dreams of. It's like a triple Oscar win and a private after party sauna with Angelina Jolie. *Half-Life* features the first Gordon to wield a rocket launcher and some of the best gameplay ever featured in a FPS, which makes it so much more than just a glorified shooter.

Half-Life has some superbly designed levels and a genuinely frightening atmosphere. It's a game you have no choice but to devote serious hours of your life to, if only to find out what happens in the constantly twisting plot. To this day, no other FPS has managed to equal its combination of brilliantly coded enemy AI and intriguingly scripted storyline. If for some strange, insane reason you haven't yet experienced this work of genius then there's aboslutely no excuse whatsoever, for you not to run down the shops as fast as possible and pick up a copy. Are you still here?

PCZVERDICT **95%**



It's like a bullet in your head.... A bullet in your head.... A bullet in your head.



Here kitty kitty kitty kitty. Erm, on second thoughts...



"Are you OK mate?"



I wonder what's up here?

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

Best Seller Series • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Spawning forth from the tree of *Half-Life*, *Gunman Chronicles* was originally intended to be a mod for the great game, but was sent to the top of the class by Sierra, who elevated it to the status of a standalone. Set in a futuristic universe, where the aliens wear cowboy hats and kick you when you're down, you play a faceless space sheriff sent to clean up the town. *Gunman* may not have quite the tense and absorbing atmosphere of *Half-Life*, but it's still great fun.

PCZVERDICT **80%**



Superb all out action 3D stratgy, without the resource management.

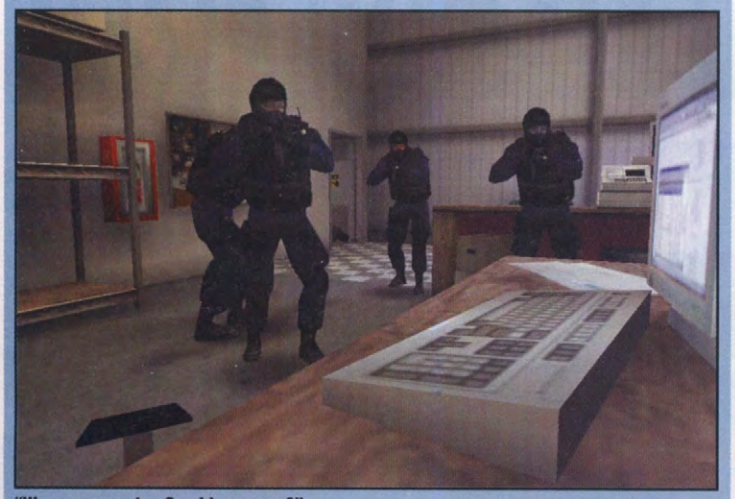
GROUND CONTROL

Best Seller Series • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Ground Control was one of the first RTS games that well and truly washed its hands of resource management and instead opted to concentrate on individual units, fantastic gameplay and creative scenarios. Put simply it's a race between two political parties – the good Crayven Corporation and the evil Order Of The New Dawn – to colonise an alien planet and wipe each other out. Gorgeous graphics and fantastic attention to detail make this a strategy player's dream come true.

PCZVERDICT **86%**



"Wow, a computer. Can I have a go?"

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION

Best Seller Series • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

This *Elite Edition* of *Swat 3* adds five additional missions, gameplay enhancements and most importantly of all, multiplayer options, which allow you to take the role of both the commander and the members of the elite forces squad. The command system has been modified from its predecessor, making it incredibly intuitive and easily accessible to newcomers. The AI is some of the most challenging and realistic ever seen in a 3D action/strategy game, with enemies often reacting with frightening speed and accuracy. This, along with the need for careful planning and stealth tactics, makes *Swat 3* one of the most compelling and tense games of recent years, and although it lacks the thrill element of *Counter-Strike*, its realism and unrivalled atmosphere makes it a must buy for any strategy/shooter fan.

PCZVERDICT **84%**



Build up a huge city, and try and keep all the inhabitants happy.

SIMCITY 2000: SPECIAL EDITION

Softkey • £6.99 • Out now

More *SimCity 2000* than you could ever wish for, and all in one place. This special edition includes the full *SimCity 2000* game, a *SimCity Urban Renewal Kit*, *Disaster Scenarios*, an exclusive interview with designer Will Wright, and over 100 new buildings from the 19th-21st century. And of course there's still weeks of endless city buidling gameplay for you to enjoy. Starting with just a patch of land a few buildings and a wad of money, you have to build up your town into a prosperous and flourishing area, one where new residents will want to live, and old ones will be kept in a pertetual state of happiness. Although it sounds easy, you'll soon realise just how challenging and addictive Sim City can be, as you contend with dissasters both natural and man made.

SimCity 2000: Special Edition is perfect if you have a low end machine, but if your hardware packs a bit more of a punch, then check out the sequel *Simcity 3000*, which is also out on budget.

PCZVERDICT **72%**



Stop harping on will you woman.

TOMB RAIDER 2

Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

After playing *Tomb Raider*, we all thought it couldn't get any better. We were wrong. *Tomb Raider 2* boasts hugely improved AI, a smoother and more logical feel and the chance to get out from those nasty dark tombs and out into the fresh air. This second adventure takes the football chested one everywhere from the canals of Venice to the snow covered mountains of Tibet.

Once again you'll have to jump from dangerous ledges, traverse pits and explore exotic locations, using Lara's improved spectrum of movement to make sure she survives new dangers and foes.

With the release of the recent *Tomb Raider* film, all five of the *Tomb Raider* games re-entered the charts, proving that their enduring appeal hasn't diminished over the years, and despite its ageing graphics there's still plenty of entertainment to be had with this second instalment.

PCZVERDICT **77%**

THEME HOSPITAL

Softkey • £6.99 • Out now

Managing a hospital may not sound like a barrel of laughs, but this classic light hearted simulation from Bullfrog manages to make presiding over matters of life and death incredibly challenging. Curing the likes of Jellyitus, heaped piles and unexpected swelling (Who among us has not suffered from the latter?) can become a surprisingly cheerful business.

Much like *SimCity*, you start from humble beginnings and with a pile of cash, building up the size and quality of your hospital as you progress. As with all games of this type, there are plenty of problems for you to solve along the way, making your job far harder as you desperately try to keep your patients happy.

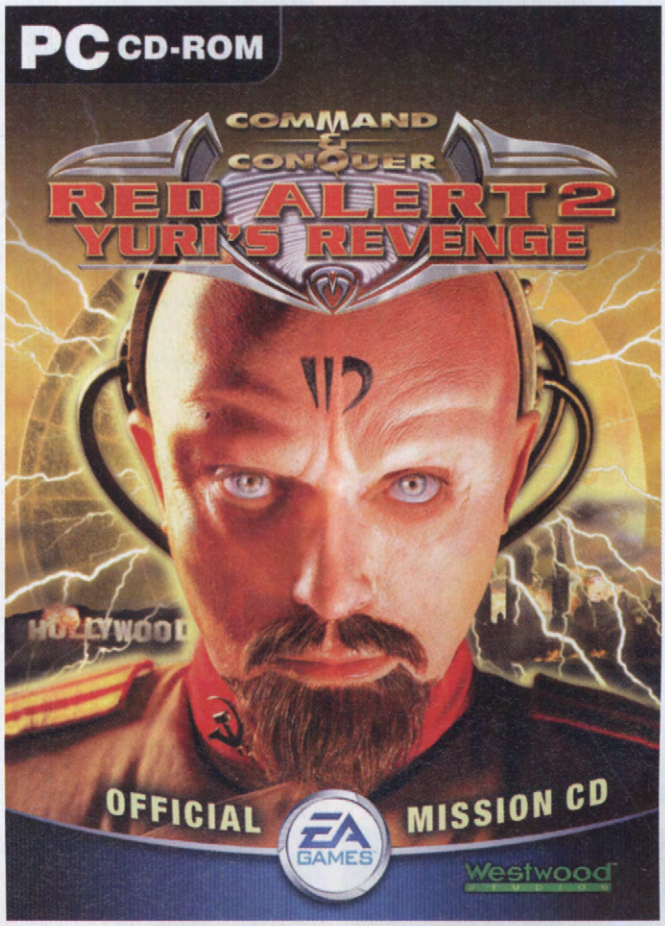
Unfortaunately, the fun proves to be somewhat short lived, as there simply isn't enough variation to keep you sat in front of your monitor for any real length of time. Fun for a week or so, but after that you'll soon realise *Theme Hospital* is a little on the shallow side.

PCZVERDICT **73%**



Hospitals as entertainment.

CAN YOU STOP YURI?



Buy Command & Conquer™ Red Alert™ 2 Yuri's Revenge™ and get £3 off with this voucher

You must own the original Command and Conquer™ Red Alert™ 2 to play this mission expansion pack

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin megastores

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ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES www.pczone.co.uk #8 NOV 2001



FIRST FULL UK REVIEW

ANARCHY ONLINE

Online role-playing without the beards

REVIEWED

PROBALL
CLUSTERBALL
CVPD SWAT
NEO CAIRO
SHATTERED GALAXY

WIN! BLUEYONDER BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS FOR A WHOLE YEAR

A SPORTING CHANCE

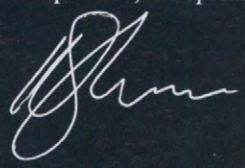


Future sports games have been few and far between on PC, but for this most minute of genres we have no less than three featured in this issue. Out now are *Clusterball* and *Proball* (reviewed on page 97 and 98) and on the way is *Speedball Arena* (see opposite).

Whether *Clusterball* could be called a sports game is open to interpretation, but what sets *Proball* apart is that not only does it do away with weapons, but it's a first-person sports mod that actually plays OK. Those unfortunate enough to have 'played' *Libero Grande* on PlayStation will probably have come away thinking what a terrible idea a first-person football game is. You can't see as much of the pitch and most of the time you're not even in control of the ball. More often than not you end up finding a space only for your team-mates to pass elsewhere.

But it's exactly because you play it with your mates – plus the confusion that may arise from playing through a first-person view – that makes *Proball* such a joy. Of course, by playing on a LAN you do have the advantage of being able to communicate with your mates – without the benefits of instant communication *Proball* does lose a few points.

And my point? Dunno really, except to say the future of future sports is looking good. Plus, yet again, we see mod developers making greater strides towards innovation than most money-minded game developers. Oh, and *Speedball Arena* will be great.



Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

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HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main *PC ZONE* reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT

- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★ Very good
- ★★★ Decent
- ★★ Not bad
- ★ Bad



The future of sport is far from safe in *Speedball Arena.*

SPEEDBALL ARENA

The return of a Bitmap classic

Even after the ten years since its original release, *Speedball 2*, remains the benchmark future sports game. Like all good sports the rules were simple: throw a metal sphere into your opponent's goal and if any of the other team get in your way, feel free to punch them in the face. There were few rules, play only stopped for brief celebrations (or when an injured player was stretchered from the pitch), and in true videogame fashion, power-ups and points multipliers were littered all over the metallic arena. Fantastic stuff and still available for about a fiver down your local games emporium.

Though a sequel did appear for the PlayStation last year it wasn't particularly well received, partly, we think, because the graphics lacked the distinctive metal sheen of the Amiga/ST original. We asked Head Bitmap Brother Mike Montgomery just before Christmas whether a PC port was likely and though he didn't rule out the possibility, the chances seemed slim. Little did we know a PC-specific version of *Speedball* was already in development, a full-3D *Unreal*-powered sequel going by the name *Speedball Arena*, and as the name suggests, the game will be a full-on multiplayer offering.

Details beyond that remain scarce. It seems the game's 'announcement' was unintentional, although you can see a bit of the 'game' at the teaser site, www.speedballarena.com.

WIREPLAY MOVES ON

But will we have to pay to play?

With all traces of Wireplay now erased from the Gameplay.com consciousness, it only remains to see if new outfit Arena Teknik, established by a number of ex-Gameplay staff, can make a go of it having bought the service for £132,500. (Gameplay bought Wireplay from BT for £5.5 million.)

The Wireplay service had been offline since early last month with Gameplay having flirted with the idea of switching to a subscription-based revenue model. It is likely – since no-one at Arena has answered our queries – that the all-new Wireplay service will follow a similar route, although of course we'll just have to wait and see.



You can still Wireplay down under.

Megastore in the UK.

EVE: THE SECOND GENESIS

Space combat from the land of puffins

Icelandic coders CCP are jumping on the online space combat bandwagon with the pending release of *Eve*, which they describe as an online RPG strategy game set in space. Like all self-respecting space combat games, *Eve* is set far into the future, at a time when the human race is expanding and colonising the outer reaches of the universe. A wormhole has apparently been discovered which leads to previously undiscovered sections of the galaxy, which is named *Eve* because it leads to new worlds and new beginnings (don't blame us, that's what it says here). All is well until an unexplained phenomenon of some sort causes the wormhole to collapse and the new colonies are cut off from mankind. So it comes to be then, that the Amarr, the Gallente, the Caldari, the Minmatar and the Jovians are left to their own devices on the world of Eve, and they co-exist quite happily to start with, but we all know that's not going to last for long or there would be no point in making a game out of them.

While it may seem on the surface that *Eve* is suspiciously similar to the rather impressive *Jumpgate* (reviewed in issue 107), offering as it does space combat, mining, trading and exploration, closer inspection reveals an altogether more sinister proposition. *Eve*, unlike many MMORPGs out there at the moment, will concentrate heavily on PvP combat (player versus player). This could make for a very cutthroat environment, and providing it doesn't make the same mistakes *Ultima Online* made at the beginning where many players spent their whole time 'grief-killing' players of lower levels, *Eve* has every chance of becoming the action-packed online role-player that many players have been waiting for.

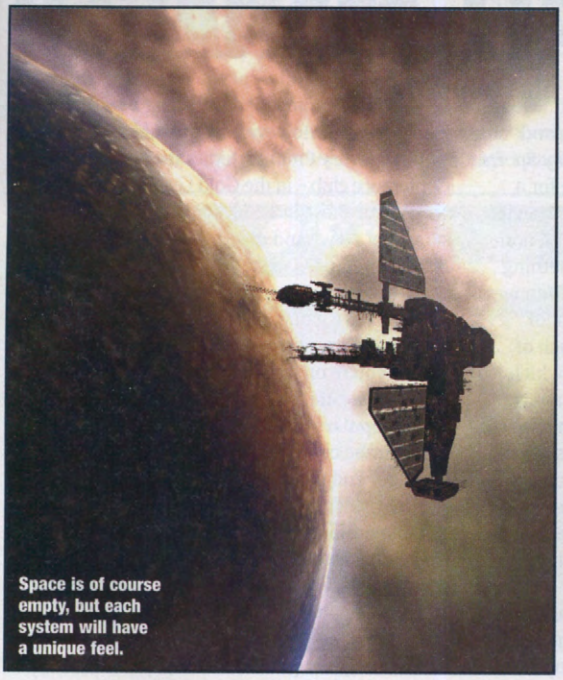
From what we've seen of the game, the action is watched from a third-person viewpoint, and there is no cockpit mode (or if there is we haven't seen it yet). In some ways this makes it look more like a traditional real-time strategy game than an RPG, but we won't know for sure until more details of the gameplay are released. Thus far CCP has kept the game pretty much under wraps, but the few teaser movies available look quite stunning. We can only wonder at what price these kind of graphics will come (start saving up for that Pentium 5 with 10 gigs of ram now) but hey, that's progress. Keep an eye on *PC ZONE* Online for more news on this intriguing title. We hope to give you a report from the beta test soon.



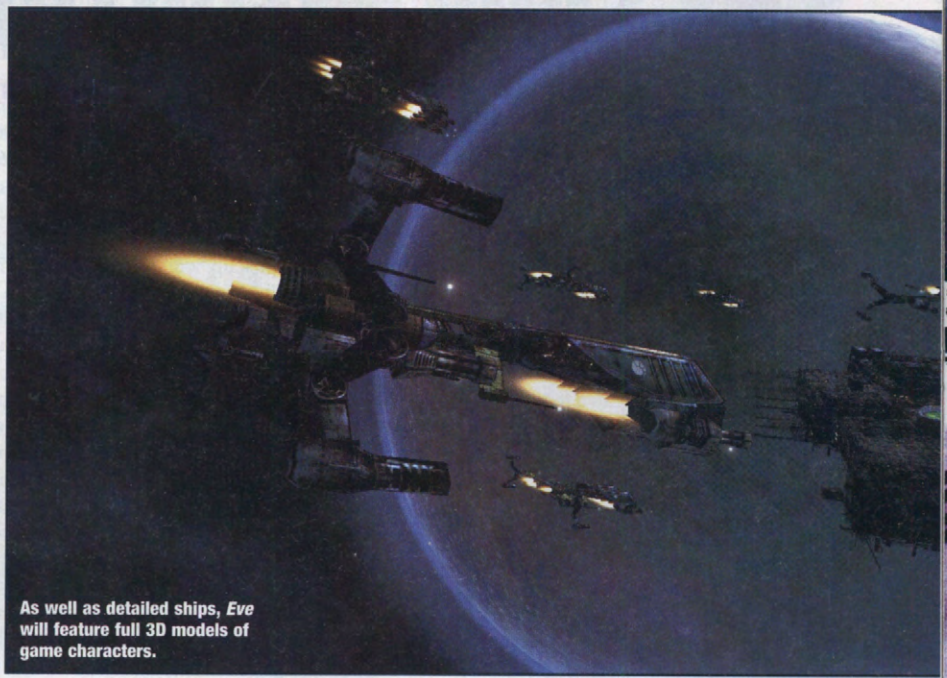
CCP is promising plenty of NPCs with which to trade.



It almost looks too good to be true.



Space is of course empty, but each system will have a unique feel.



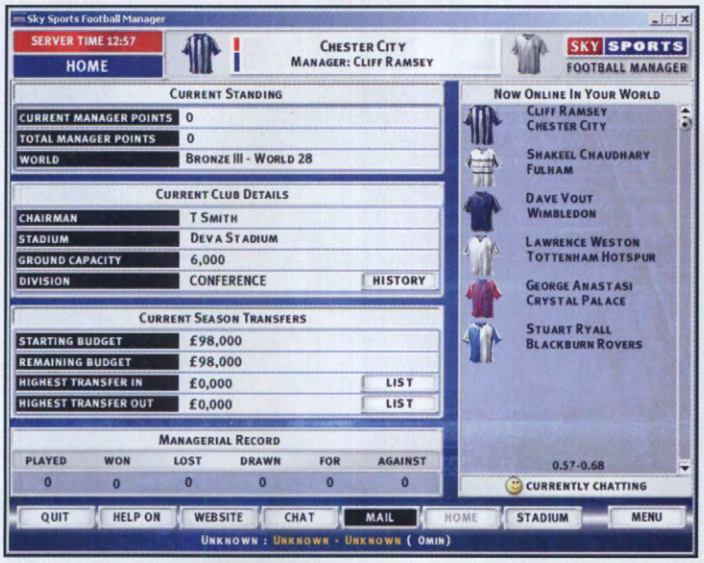
As well as detailed ships, *Eve* will feature full 3D models of game characters.



Slightly better looking than *Championship Manager*.



Managers can chat during games, just try to keep it clean.



The mighty Chester City propping up grass roots football in the Conference.



Versions for Spain, Italy, Germany and France are planned.

SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER

Steve Hill, here, previewing a football management game? With his reputation...

Despite some spirited attempts, the massively multiplayer online football management game still remains something of a Holy Grail. Done properly, there is the potential for a genuinely mainstream online experience that could easily dwarf the likes of *EverQuest* and *Ultima*. After all, what's more popular? Football or tunic-making? If you don't know, then consider which of the aforementioned activities has numerous television channels dedicated to it, and an audience of billions. Here's a clue: it doesn't involve tunics.

In this country at least, Sky Sports effectively owns football, and has almost single-handedly transformed it from a proletarian passion to a middle class pursuit. Once the domain of council estates, Sky dishes have penetrated suburbia to the extent that 75 per cent of subscribers now reside in the ABC upper social bracket. And it's all down to football.

Something of a captive audience then, and one NI Sports is hoping to tap into with *Sky Sports Football Manager*, which will be available for a monthly £6.99 subscription fee. The intention is to create a game that is simple enough for a non-gamer to pick up, while also offering something approaching the depth of *Championship Manager*. Sky is involved for the long term, and a lot of money is being thrown at the project. Much of this will come in the form of cash prizes, which will be awarded to the most successful managers. However, success isn't measured solely in terms of trophies, as each club is effectively means tested on a match-by-match basis. So for instance, the manager of Manchester United will be expected to win virtually every game, whereas Chester City's boss will probably be commended for simply getting 11 players on the field.

The leagues will exist in a pyramid system of parallel worlds, with all but the upper echelon operating in an accelerated season, with up to four games a week. However, for the select 114 bosses – one for every Premiership, Nationwide and Conference club – in the Gold League, their fixtures will mirror those in real life, and be played on the same day. News and results from this league will be documented via extensive website support, with the idea being to create an active community.

The entire game is server-based, and the basic client software can be downloaded anywhere. So even if you're on holiday, you can slope away to an Internet café for a swift game, which should prove popular with your partner. And if you can't make it, the computer will act as an assistant manager and pick the team in your absence.

Clearly, it's an extremely ambitious concept, not to mention a logistical nightmare. NI Sports is acutely aware that *Championship Manager 4* is only a year away, and that it will have to get it right. Rest assured, we'll let you know if it does. In the meantime, www.nisports.com should see you right.

Megastore in the UK.

NO PEACE FOR WWII ONLINE

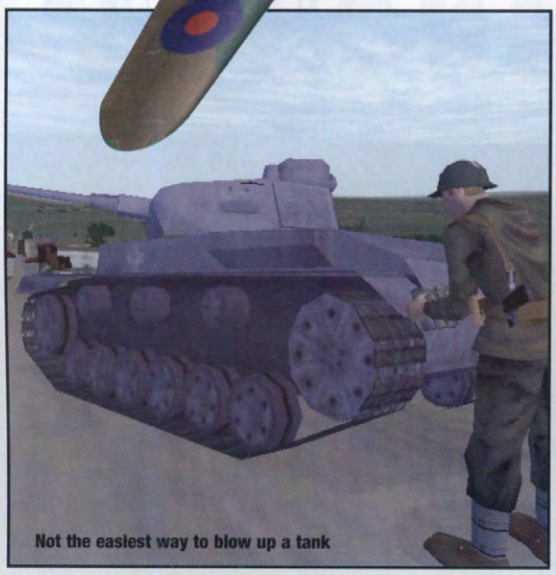
It'll be over by Christmas



Still grinding through what is essentially a beta testing stage, there is still no news as to whether a UK release of the massively-multiplayer WWII sim *WWII Online* is on the cards.

Released in the US in the June, the game has been riddled with problems; of the 30,000 registered buyers, only 3,000 seem to be sticking with the game due to graphical glitches, framerate and lag probelms. Slowly, however, things are getting better, with the latest patch offering more stable code.

As is traditional with online games *WWII Online* costs US$10 per month to play, with the first month free, though to their credit the developers have yet to start charging. When they do and if interest picks up again, a European publisher is sure to take get onboard. Until then, keep a eye out at www.wwiionline.net.



Not the easiest way to blow up a tank

Y-FRONTS SOCCERSIM

The *PC ZONE* Tenuous Headline Machine™ goes into overdrive

Soccersim, *ZONE*'s favourite online football management game, has emerged from a lengthy beta testing period, having been bought by some French outfit called Reality Games a couple of months back. The upshot is that the browser-based game has had a minor facelift and is looking all the better for it. Bizarrely, however, the game has been renamed to *Y-Soccer Sim* – a pants title if ever there was one.

Costing just under £10 for a three-month subscription (less if you sign up for a year), you can find out more by visiting www.reality-games.com, where you'll also discover the interestingly titled *Formula Y*, which is in actual fact an online F1 management game.



Pick a team from across Europe and steer it to success.

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb trawls the net for the latest mod news...

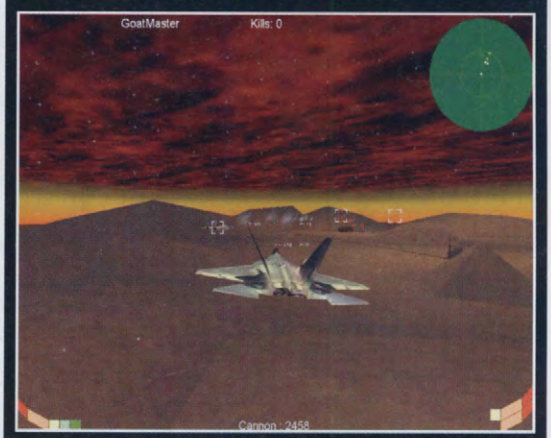
First-Person Shooters continue to be the staple produce of mod builders everywhere and although a raft of new games (OK, remakes) are in the pipeline, the current crop of popular mods are updating themselves on an almost daily basis.

Starting with the almost immortal *Half-Life* World War II mod *Day Of Defeat*, which is now up to version 1.3b with an updated Snowtown map, cheat and bug fixes, new sounds and even more fun content. There's a *DoD* league on the way too, and you can find the latest files along with league details at **www.dayofdefeatmod.com**. Also updated is the *2000AD* inspired Judgement Mod, which is now at version 1.1 and features bot support as well as many other improvements. Check it out at **http://justicedepartment.co.uk**. Meanwhile, for *Counter-Strike* fans the latest information on CS1.3 (retail 1.0.0.3) can be found at **www.csnation.counter-strike.net/csinfo/next** and a new Map-pack from the CS Central team at **www.cscentral.net**.

More too for **Quake** fans with the first beta release of *Roughnecks: Operation Pest Control* for *Quake II* (**www.eocities.com/maxxjag/**), which aims to give *QII* players a taste of the Arachnid-blasting mayhem from sci-fi film *Starship Troopers*. *Quake III* players have an update to the *SuperHeroes Mod* (v1.04b full download from www.planetquake.com/super3), and you'll find some spectacular news relating to *Quake IV*, *Quake: The Movie* and more at **www.planetquake.com/quakecon**.

Unreal Tournament gamers aren't left out either, with *Unreal Fortress* (*UT*'s very own *TFC* clone) getting a new site at **www.planetfortress.com/unfbootcamp**, and map-designer Chicoverde unveiling more stunners at **www.planetunreal.com/chicoverde**. Special Forces mod *SAS: Into the Lions' Den* is moving towards beta release and putting a load of new screenshots up at **www.planetunreal.com/sas**. On the *PC ZONE* CD this month is the latest version of fun *UT* mod *Airfight*, which sees players strapped into a variety of high-performance jets before trying to blast each other from the sky. The models and maps are cool although the aircraft physics/camera angle mix takes some getting used to. It's worth a good 3/5 score with more improvements to come. Find it at **www.planetunreal.com/airfight**.

Non FPS games are also in the frame, with Homeworld mod *Star Wars Fleet Academy* patched to version 4.2 at **http://tgu.org.uk/users/swfa**, more *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* mods at **www.planettonyhawk.com/mods**, *Ground Control* maps at **http://maps.groundcontrolhq.com/mapindex.php3** and *Shogun: Total War* maps by the dozen at **http://www.totalwar.org/maps/demoedit**.



***Airfight*: catch it on this month's CD.**

COMPETITION

WIN!

FEEL THE NEED

BLUEYONDER BROAD

A broadband connection is the only way to enjoy games online. Thanks to blueyonder and *PC ZONE* you can enjoy the benefits without splashing the cash

Playing games online with a standard dial-up connection is like playing football with a blindfold, or netball in an evening gown. Thankfully affordable highspeed connections are here and the pick of the bunch is Telewest's blueyonder broadband service.

And things are going to get even better. Telewest's revolutionary blueyonder broadband website launches in September. The first of its kind in the UK, it enhances the existing blueyonder service with dedicated broadband content and services and includes a unique community for online gamers, in addition to broadband-specific music, entertainment and local information.

In addition to low latency and super-low ping rates from blueyonder, Telewest is launching a multiplayer gaming service on its new blueyonder site to provide the best online gaming experience. This service will have both free and subscription based elements, allowing access to LAN-quality game servers, which you can compete on individually or as part of a clan. You can also opt into various leagues, ladders and online tournaments, which will be supported by blueyonder's dedicated team of community managers.

The blueyonder service is available for a one-off installation fee of £50 and a

Megastore in the UK.

FOR SPEED, WITH BAND FROM TELEWEST

blueyonder
broadband internet

fixed-fee of £33 per month. If you subscribe to one or more of Telewest's other services, such as digital TV or a phone line, the monthly fee is reduced to £25. This gives you a fast (nearly 10 times the speed of a standard dial-up connection), always-on Internet connection, with no call charges to worry about. So, you won't be asked to finish your game because your partner wants to have a chit-chat with a mate.

With this in mind, we got on the blower and persuaded Telewest to let us give you the chance to win one of their connections for free. To find out if you can receive the service you'll need to log onto Telewest's website – www.blueyonder.co.uk/info – and enter your details into the postcode finder. If you can't, don't panic because you can still enter the competition and experience high-speeds with an all expenses paid trip for the winner and a guest to Goodwood's historic Grand Prix circuit. Once there you'll get to drive two classic cars for three laps (choose from an E type Jaguar, Porsche Carrera, AC Cobra, Aston Martin DB4 or Ferrari 308), plus four laps in an Alfa Romeo 156, four laps in a Formula 2000 single-seater and 2.5 hours of lightning kart and skidpan driving. If you're still able to walk after all that you'll finish with a flight in a Bell Jet Ranger and a champagne lunch. Travel and accommodation is also included. If you're lucky enough to be in a Telewest region you'll also get a year's free subscription to blueyonder.

Ten runners-up will receive a year's free subscription to the blueyonder broadband Internet service if they live in a Telewest region.

All you have to do to enter is read the question below, work out the answer and then write it on a postcard, along with your name, address, email address and telephone number. Then send your answer in to us at: blueyonder Compo, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF. You can also enter by logging onto www.blueyonder.co.uk/info. The closing date is Thursday 18 October.

Which of the following games is the most popular online shooter?

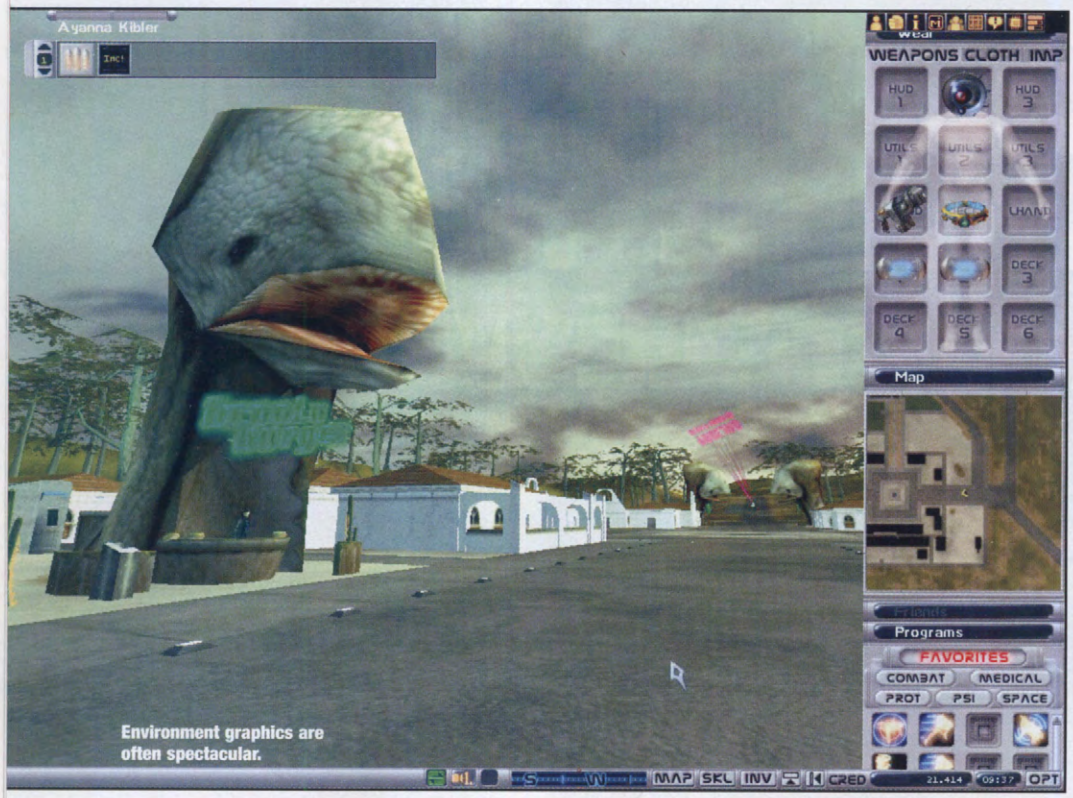
A) Chuckie Egg

B) EverQuest

C) Mary King's Riding School

Terms and conditions: only correct entries received before the closing date (October 18th) will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post by October 30th. The winner of the Goodwood prize must have held a UK driving licence for at least two years and must produce it on the day, and must be between 5ft 2in and 6ft 3in and weigh no more than 16 stone. Other restrictions may apply. No cash alternatives. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew! *As long as you live in a region covered by Telewest

WIN! AN ALL-EXPENSES PAID TRIP TO GOODWOOD AND DRIVE SOME OF THE BEST CLASSIC CARS IN THE WORLD. 10 RUNNERS-UP WILL RECEIVE A BLUEYONDER BROADBAND CONNECTION.



Environment graphics are often spectacular.



ANARCHY ONLINE

£29.99 (plus monthly fee) • Funcom • Out now • www.anarchy-online.com

The dust is finally settling on Funcom's impressive entry into the online RPG scene with *Anarchy Online*. Has *EverQuest* met its match? Let's ask *Chris Anderson*

HELP IS AT HAND?

If you're prepared to wait an eternity...

If you get a problem in the game, simply petition for a GM and someone will help. In theory. In six weeks of having the same problem (text disappearing from screen and no facility to view weapon and armour stats in chat channels), I have petitioned repeatedly and not received a solitary response. *EverQuest* is pretty woeful for this, but at least the GMs in *EQ* contact you eventually if you wait long enough. I think a six-week wait with no response whatsoever in *Anarchy Online* is a sure sign that Funcom's in-game customer service is in dire need of attention.

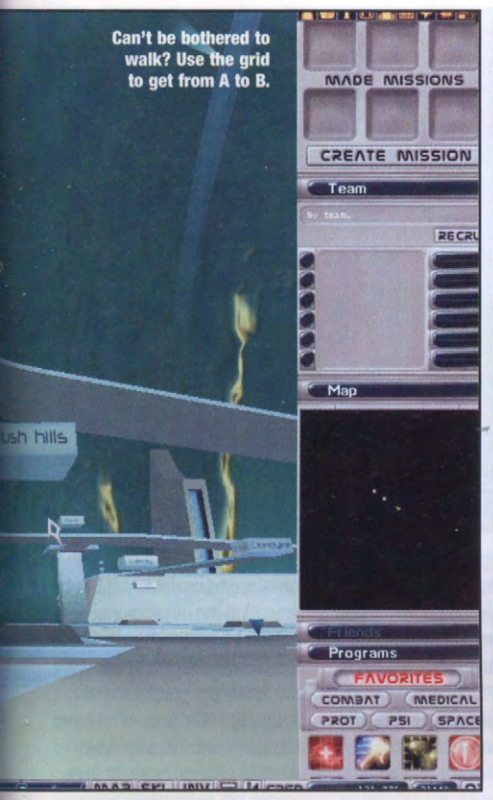
All things considered, *Anarchy Online* has made a rather impressive start. Yes, there are bugs galore, there are memory issues that cause what most people would erroneously describe as lag, when in fact it's a rather serious memory allocation problem that renders the game almost unplayable in crowded areas for people with less than 512Mb of RAM. There are lag issues too and comedy design faults that are slowly being rectified. But this is the world of online RPGs. *EverQuest* was just as bad when it was first released, and *Ultima Online* was much worse. Almost six weeks into its official release, *Anarchy Online* is finally approaching a vague sense of uneasy stability. It's not perfect, but it's playable. If you're used to playing *Everquest* or *Asheron's Call* and you launch into *Anarchy Online* expecting the same sort of smooth gameplay, you will be disappointed. *Anarchy Online* has a long, long way to go before it realises its true potential, but already the signs are there that Funcom will get to the top of the online RPG ladder eventually. Whether or not you want to get involved in the early days of *Anarchy Online*, complete with its ups and downs, highs and lows, is up to you. Fortunately, it's not a decision you will have to make alone. What follows is a detailed account of my experiences in *Anarchy Online* in the first six weeks of its release. The rest is up to you.



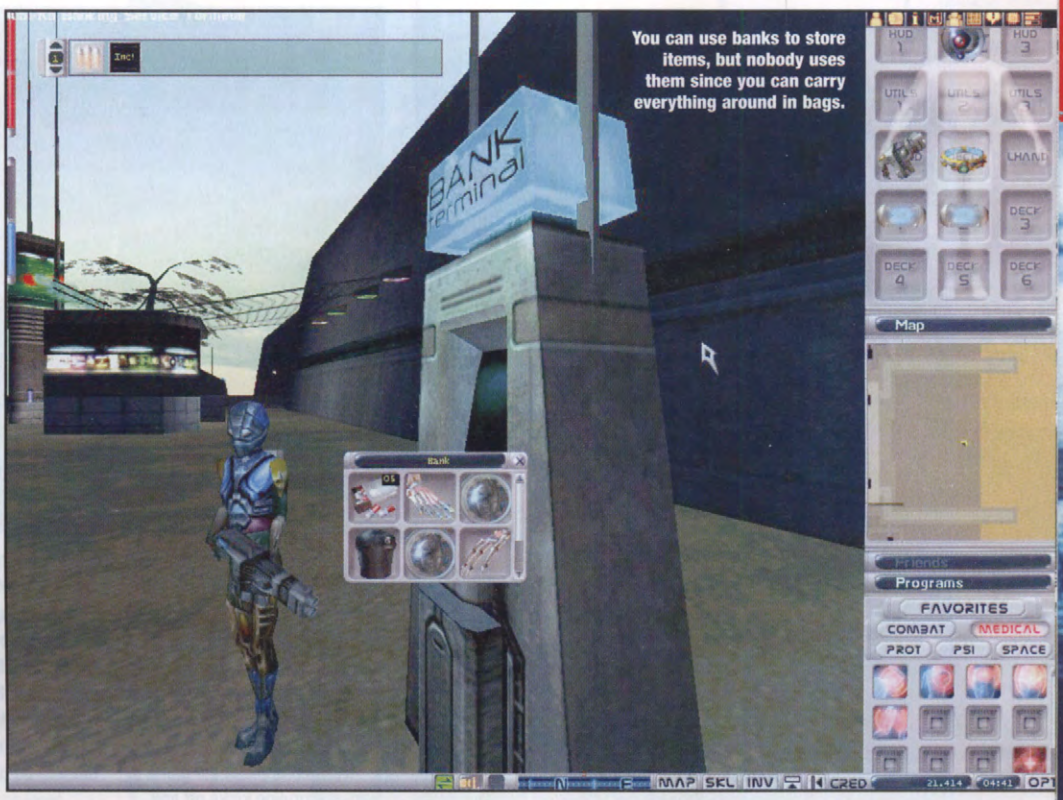
BRAVE NEW WORLD

Visually, *Anarchy Online* is a thing of beauty. Highly detailed environments and smoothly animated characters make for a very immersive gameworld, and the huge selection of equipment, armour and clothes make it easy for players to create an individual persona and stand out from the crowd. This sort of freedom to 'be who you want to be' was first pioneered in *Ultima Online*, and later ignored by *EverQuest* (player characters in *EverQuest* look, for the most part, eerily similar). While visuals are not the most important element in an online RPG, it certainly helps to suspend disbelief when you are not walking around in a world where everyone looks the same, and newcomers to the RPG scene and casual gamers will love this ability to make an 'identikit' persona. If proof of this were needed, you need only witness the mayhem in the in-game shopping channel when sunglasses were first discovered in the game. The entire shopping channel appeared to be obsessed with getting a pair of shades. All hopes of finding that special piece of equipment or gun upgrade or new armour were lost as the world went mad out-bidding each

Megastore in the UK.



Can't be bothered to walk? Use the grid to get from A to B.



You can use banks to store items, but nobody uses them since you can carry everything around in bags.

other for the best set of shades they could get their hands on. Hopeless despair. But if that's what makes people happy, who are we to argue?

Sophisticated player emotes further separate *Anarchy Online* from its rivals in terms of presentation. You cannot fail to be impressed at the animations as players dance smoothly and elegantly and gesture with a seemingly endless line of expressions at their disposal. Word has it that *Shadows Of Luclin* (the new *EverQuest* expansion due for release at the end of this year) will feature character expressions and emotes. They will have to be something pretty special to come anywhere near the quality evident here. Visually then, *Anarchy Online* is the pick of the current online RPG crop. Gameplay, of course, is another story altogether.

"Visually, *Anarchy Online* is the pick of the current online RPG crop. Gameplay, of course, is another thing altogether"

WELCOME TO RUBI-KA

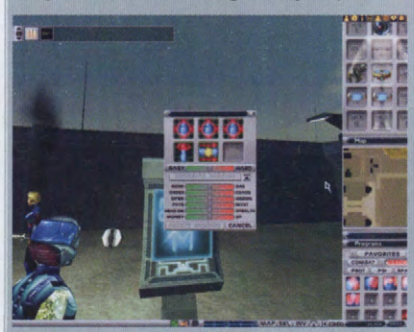
When you first enter the world of Rubi-ka (the futuristic planet that plays host to *Anarchy Online*), you will be invited to create a character. There are many character choices to choose from including soldiers (frontline combat), nano technicians (damage dealers) and doctors and adventurers (healers) to name but a few. Deciding which profession to take is obviously largely a matter of taste, but there is currently much debate over what the best professions are. *Anarchy Online* goes through so many changes with every major patch, that it's still too early to tell which professions will prove to be the most popular and satisfying to play. Whichever class you choose, you will soon be thrown into the newbie zone to kill monsters and gain experience to go up in level. I would suggest playing a few you like the sound of to about level five before deciding which one to play 'proper' to the game's higher levels.

Character class aside, the most important decision you will make at character creation is choosing your allegiance. The world of Rubi-ka is in a constant state of conflict between Omni-tek (a futuristic corporation) and the Clans (freedom

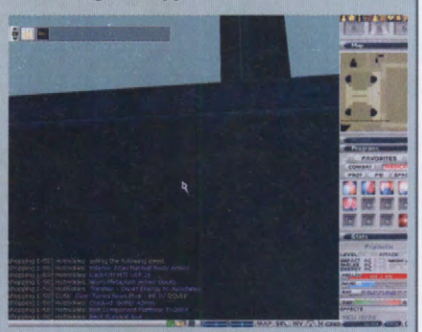
NO DOWNTIME?

Funcom prides itself on the fact there is no downtime in battles. It is right, and *Anarchy Online* beats *EverQuest* hands-down in this respect. But there is plenty of hidden downtime in the game. If you want decent weapons and armour, prepare yourself for this...

Weapons and armour (and many items in the game) have a Quality Level (QL) which gives you an idea of how good they are. You can only use things that are close to your level in terms of QL, so if the armour and weapon shops don't have what you want (they rarely do), you will have to go on missions to get items. Subsequently, you will spend an age requesting missions before anything you want shows up as a mission reward. So, if you want good gear you will either spend hours staring at the mission terminal... or spend hours staring at a screen not unlike the one shown below right. The shopping channel in the corner of the screen shows people selling stuff. They sell all kinds of things: weapons, armour, items, implants, you name it, you can get it here. There's one slight problem, if people aren't selling items close to your level in terms of QL, you will just have to sit here and stare at this screen until they do. This is the single biggest problem in *Anarchy Online*. You are forced to do missions repeatedly or shop to get what you need. Something needs to change. Funcom says enemies in the wild will soon drop better items. I hope they drop something better than the useless low-level pap they give you at the moment, and instead give you something you can actually use. There's nothing more annoying than sitting around waiting for things to happen.



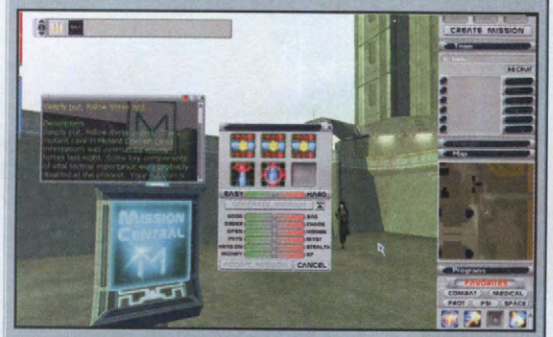
The mission terminal: you'll see this a helluva lot.



The shopping channel is in the bottom left corner.

MONEY MATTERS

To get anywhere in *Anarchy Online* you'll need big money. So you'll have to do missions...



This is the mission terminal. I've taken an observation mission. This means there's an NPC at the mission location who Omni-tek want me to observe. So I'd better get moving.



This is the entrance to the mission. This character is only level 19, so the distance is not too far. At higher levels they send you all over the bloody place and it can take ages.



There are enemies in all missions. You can get a reasonable amount of experience on missions in addition to money, particularly if you're teamed with other people.



Here he is, Harris Brigges. All I have to do is watch him and I will complete the mission. It didn't take long to clear the mission area (about 45 minutes) and now I'm rich. Sort of.



The armour and weapon shops. Why are they there? They never have anything you want.



fighters struggling to free Rubi-ka from Omni-tek's oppressive grip). While this choice may seem to be there purely for role-playing purposes, the side of the conflict you choose to play will have more ominous repercussions when the game's built-in storyline kicks off and player-to-player combat will, presumably, play a large part in the proceedings. You can, if you wish, stay neutral at the beginning and decide which side to play later. You can even change sides later in the game through the use of application forms. Either way, whichever side you choose, you will then be left to the serious business of levelling.

Anarchy Online, in its most simple form, is no different to any other RPG out there. It's all about killing things to gain experience, going up in level when you acquire enough experience points and buying weapons and armour with the money you loot from the stuff you've killed. When you first enter the training grounds and start shooting things in the head with whatever beginner weapon you've been given, you may experience an eerie feeling of déjà vu. Target the monster, press Q to attack, and keep shooting until it's dead. Nothing new there then, and indeed, this will be more or less what you will be doing for the first few levels. However, there is another way to advance in *Anarchy Online* and it's probably the game's single most innovative feature...

"*Anarchy Online* is an excellent game as it stands, but its long-term appeal is currently in question"

CONTROLLED MAYHEM

There are mission terminals all over Rubi-ka. Walk up to one, right-click it, request a mission, and you can read details of the mission at hand, which tell you where to go, what your mission objective is, how much money you will receive for the mission, and what your reward will be if you successfully complete it (usually a weapon, a piece of armour, or a useful item). Upon accepting the mission, you can download the mission co-ordinates to your compass, and follow the pointer to your destination. There are several mission types. You might be asked to retrieve or fix an item, or observe or even assassinate someone at the mission location. Generally speaking, missions take place in a maze of corridors, with most rooms containing an enemy of some sort to be dispatched in whatever manner you see fit. Missions are generated based on your level, but you can change the difficulty if you think you're hard and want to take on more challenging enemies to get more money and better items. This method of advancement is not as exciting as hunting out in the wilds with other players, but it's



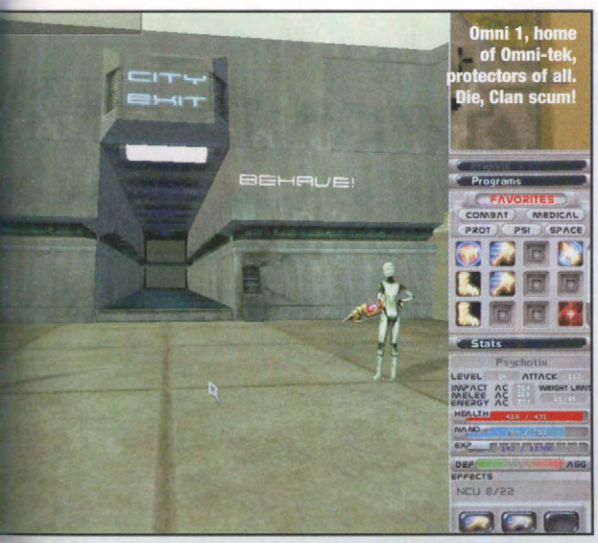
The giant online Subbutteo tournament in full swing.

(c) Funcom, www.funcom.com

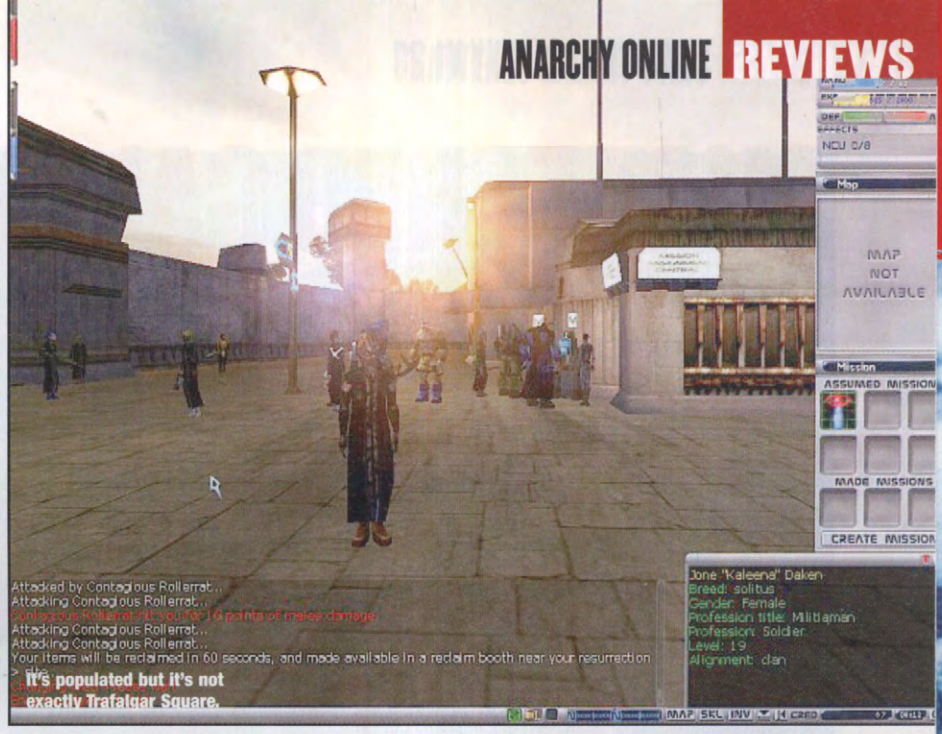


If I saw one of these I'd run a mile.

Megastore in the UK.



Omni 1, home of Omni-tek, protectors of all. Die, Clan scum!



It's populated but it's not exactly Trafalgar Square.

a reasonable alternative to competing for monster spawns at busy locations where there are too many people.

Regardless, you had better get used to doing missions, because there is no other way to make decent money in the game. Trade skills may prove lucrative when there are more players who can use them properly (most of the trade skills in the game don't work as advertised at the moment) but the only way to get ahead in *Anarchy Online* as it stands is to do missions, and lots of them. You'll need money for just about everything in this game. Nanos (spells), implants (they improve your skills and stats when you install them 'magically' on to your person), weapons, armour… they all cost credits and, while you will undoubtedly pick up a lot of coin hunting in the wilds, it's mere peanuts compared to what you can get from a well-paid mission. And so begins the treadmill: hunt in the wilds to level fast, stop to do missions so you can buy equipment and upgrades when the monsters you are fighting prove too tough, repeat to fade.

The highest level you can attain in *Anarchy Online* is 200. I have to be honest here and say I do not want to spend 200 levels hunting monsters that appear to be increasingly higher-level variations on the same things and completing missions that are becoming increasingly tedious. Like I said at the beginning, *Anarchy Online* is in its early stage of development. It's an excellent game as it stands, but its long-term appeal is currently in question. Funcom is planning to introduce more interesting and challenging missions and static dungeons with 'interesting' enemies. Let's hope they do. *Anarchy Online* is a great achievement, and we have high hopes that it will eventually rule the online RPG roost. As ever, *PC ZONE* Online will be on hand to investigate any major updates.



This mutant camp is typical of the outdoor hunting areas in *Anarchy Online*.





Nano crystals are AO's equivalent of spells.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Mind-boggling variety of weapons, armour and useful items • Excellent environment and character graphics • Innovative chat interface • Huge potential for PvP when the storyline kicks off

DOWNERS Long-term appeal is still in doubt • In-game customer support is non-existent • Missions are a necessity, not an option • Bugs, crashes, lag… they're all still there

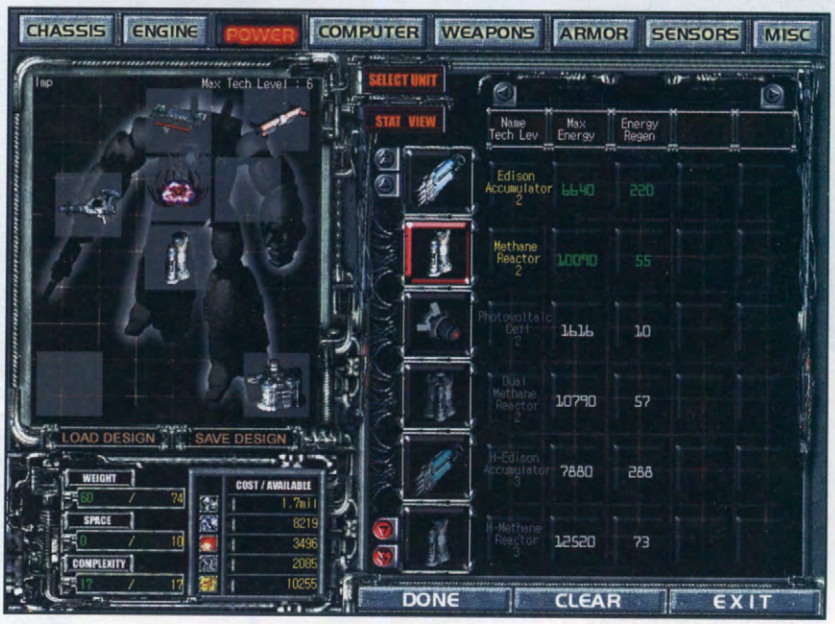
Has the potential to be the best MMORPG to date, so stick with it through the teething troubles

SHATTERED GALAXY V1.28

US$29.99 plus US$9.95 monthly subscription • Nexon • www.sgalaxy.com

A persistent world, real-time strategy game for 30,000 players? *Phil Wand* feels he may be a little outnumbered

Anyone who feels the real-time strategy world has been on something of a downer since *Total Annihilation* may find *Shattered Galaxy* is the pick-me-up they've been waiting for. While not RTS in its strictest sense, with events off the battlefield as important to progress as events on it, and with the minutiae of resource management handled for you, the game's combat interface borrows heavily from household names like *Red Alert* and ensures that the first few hours of fighting pass without confusion. So although the back of the box may confound you with talk of fusing real-time strategy, turn-based strategy, role-playing and squad-based combat, conjuring images of you frozen with embarrassment as teammates laugh at your incompetence, rest assured that the way it looks and the way it plays will be instantly familiar to any real-time devotee.



Each unit is built from a wide variety of building blocks.

COMMAND AND CONQUER

Players kick things off by naming a new hero, allying with one of the game's factions, choosing the appearance of their avatar, and juggling a set number of points between tactics, education, clout, and mechanical aptitude. Tactics determine how many units your hero is able to control – if you outrank all others in this respect, you automatically become field commander and are rewarded with experience after your encounters. Education allows you to use advanced weaponry and the latest gizmos, clout represents not your physical strength but political status and power (brawn doesn't come into it: heroes control armies telekinetically using a mind-expanding drug), and mechanical aptitude governs your prowess at maintaining and designing your units. As you progress in the game, you are able to top up each area of your character with points as you win them, and in turn increase the potency of your units.

DAMAGE REPAIR

Go online and you'll find yourself looking down on your hero's avatar from a third-person, isometric viewpoint that evokes memories of *EverQuest* (or *Leisure Suit Larry*, depending on your gaming heritage). You are able to move the avatar freely around the capital of your chosen faction, entering city buildings to perform different duties, such as repairing damaged units, resurrecting dead ones, exchanging items for money, or playing skirmish battles against computer-controlled aliens. This latter area acts as a tutorial for rookies, allowing them to hone their combat skills, it's also a place where existing players can notch up experience points and test new troops. The politically minded among you will be able to vote on foreign policy and determine how and where your faction expands.



The map shows areas controlled by your faction.

> **"There are four core types of unit: infantry, mobile, aviation and specialist"**

MORE GT THAN C&C

As with *Earth 2150* or even *MechWarrior*, units can be built from scratch using a wide range of chassis, power plants, armour and weaponry, with possible combinations nearing the non-finite as your skills improve. There are four core types of unit: infantry, mobile, aviation and specialist. The first refers to the most basic type of troop, and is the cheapest way to build your forces, the second to the more expensive tracked vehicles including tanks and armoured cars, the third to aircraft, which is fast but fragile and the last to specialist units such as medics, trackers and mine layers. At the start of the game the variety of hardware at your disposal is somewhat limited, but as things progress you'll find the selection opening up nicely. It's actually very rewarding, and in this respect it's more like *Gran Turismo* than *Command & Conquer*.

TROOPING AROUND

You control between six and 12 units in battle – the exact number under your command is dependant on your tactical attributes – and must consider the military science of each encounter rather than relying on stockpiles of tanks and missiles for last-second armageddon. If you lose your troops, you do have the ability to return with replacements from the substitute bench, but

Megastore in the UK.



Anyone familiar with real-time strategy will be able to jump right in, but co-operation is essential to succeed.

generally speaking such foolhardy behaviour gets you nowhere. Battles are immensely enjoyable, and with the right people backing you up can be very rewarding.

The fact that each battle can have up to 50 players throwing their weight around makes reckless strategies all the more likely to fail, and the need for diplomacy paramount – annoy those fighting alongside you, and previously friendly guns are likely to be swung round to point in your direction. Never forget that, as a persistent state game, the success of your faction is more important than the success of the individual. The chat interface at the bottom of the screen is the best place to announce your intentions and ask for assistance, and unlike many other online team-based games, communication seems to be the norm.

GALACTIC ALLIANCES

Shattered Galaxy is a hugely involving game, its star attraction being the alliance of *EverQuest*-style role-playing with *Total Annihilation*-style top-down combat. You can play it as often or as little as you like, and each time the feeling of camaraderie and achievement will keep you thinking about it as your head hits the pillow. The only reservation we have about this game is the online patch system, which sucks, and its slightly flaky behaviour under Windows NT. PCZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Two genres rolled into one • Familiar • Lag hardly noticeable

DOWNERS Patch software a nightmare • Team killing

★★★★★

***Total Annihilation* for a massively multiplayer world**



It's a like a huge, sprawling game of *Total Annihilation*. Which is good.

CVPD-SWAT

Requires full version of Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear: Urban Operations • Out now • www.planetrainbowsix.com/dtd/page_14.htm

Tony Lamb goes rogue in the urban jungle

ON THE CD

Chula Vista Police Department – Special Weapons And Tactics is the latest in an impressive line of mods from the blazing keyboards of the *Dtd/Cocobolo Ops* team, long-term producers of add-ons for Red Storms' superb FPS. What has always set *Rogue Spear* aside has been its almost slavish attention to detail and gritty realism – there are no loony power-ups or weapons to play with here – and the *Cocobolo* mods continue this ultra-realistic theme.

Into its 14Mb file the team have packed no less than three different skin sets to cover the Chula Vista PD along with the Los Angeles PD SWAT and Newark New Jersey Emergency Response Team (NNJPD ERT). Each has a variety of character models, uniforms, weapons and configurations, which is true to its real-life counterpart.

Bear in mind that this mod isn't aimed at the "must have lots of maps" crowd, but rather at *Rogue* fans who enjoy using weapons that look and behave just like the real thing, as well as running around in uniforms that make them look mean and tough. Character models and uniforms are lovingly re-created, with attention paid to every element of the real-life officers appearance. Textures, colours and component items of the outfits are just as they should be (not that we'd know) and it's telling to hear that actual SWAT team members and police officers worked with the modellers to make sure everything was spot-on, although the *PC ZONE* insurance package doesn't yet cover the health risks inherent in investigating a SWAT trooper's inside leg measurement to make sure.

Also thrown into the melting pot is a new menu system and splash screen. Single-player becomes 'Loner', multiplayer is now 'Multi Agency' and Replay becomes "Evidence", among other amendments. There are quite a few little tweaks like this and while they don't constitute a major change, they add nicely to the mod's identity.

Unfortunately, there aren't any new maps, but the levels of detail the team have squeezed onto their character skins and weapon models make this a rewarding mod nonetheless. In Lone Wolf mode, the weapons and revamped menu system are the only real benefits, but run an Assault, Terrorist Hunt or other team game and this mod really comes into its own. PCZ

"The weapons will be pub-gossip fodder to any self-respecting gun nut"

The weapons themselves will be pub-gossip fodder to any self-respecting gun nut or *Rogue Spear*/*Counter-Strike*/*Strike Force* fan, with old favourites like the AR-15, HK MP-5 A5 & SD4, Benelli M-3 Super 90 and Remington 700 PSS leading the field of familiar firearms. There are also some new playthings like the Air Taser and even a Police Baton if you're feeling like a bit of a hero. What is different in this mod is that they just look so good – you could almost eat your dinner off Remington's Tango 51 sniper rifle for example.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Wonderfully detailed weapons and skins • Neat new interface

DOWNERS No new maps • Mainly familiar weapons • No online opportunities

★★★★★

More clothes for your favourite action men





Get your batons out for the lads.



"Maybe we should move the bodies, they're starting to smell."



No new levels unfortunately, just the decorations.



The interface gets treated to a new lick of paint.

© EA Ele We

Megastore in the UK.

CLUSTERBALL



£19.99 • Daydream Software • Out now • www.clusterball.com

Richie Shoemaker had a very nasty case of clusterball once, but that's another story altogether

Clusterball: the male adult form of nappy rash, or a future sports flying game from Sweden? Thankfully, the latter, since reading the manual reveals Lars, Ulf and Erik are just a few of the team responsible for what turns out to be a surprisingly enjoyable game.

You wouldn't think so to look at it though. Not that I'm for one moment suggesting the game looks even remotely like a clump of red raw testicles, but even for an online game the textures are undefined and the open maps coated in billowing fog – to a degree reminiscent of *Turok* (remember him? No? I'll shut up then). Not that these unrefinements have much impact on the gameplay, in fact it is perhaps entirely due to them that *Clusterball* offers an impressive sense of speed, again redolent of another old game, *Terminal Velocity*.

So apart from skitting around in hover cars over outlandish themed maps, what is *Clusterball* all about? Well, collecting balls actually, and flying with strings of the things through a central hoop, thereby scoring points and, in time, the respect of other players from around the world. It's a bit like 52-card pick-up, only with more cards, where the aim is to actually pick up the most rather than force someone else to. Of course, the balls aren't just randomly spewed across the landscape, but are instead conveniently snaked across short platforms which you just scoop up and head back for goal. Simple really.

HEY, THIS IS EASY

Consequently *Clusterball* manages to be both easy to learn and marginally less so to master. It takes just five minutes to get in the winning way against offline bots, while online, things are quite different. The less experienced pootle off to collect the longest string of multicoloured baubles in the hope of securing a massive score, when in effect what they are actually trailing behind them is effectively a banner saying 'Shoot me out the sky'. Higher level players descend like piranhas on approaching newbies, poaching their cache with a well-aimed Ball Snatcher.

"Higher level players descend like piranhas on approaching newbies"

HANDS OFF MY BALLS

It is arguably the use of a central goal area that ensures the great always prey on the not-so-great, offering for those whose choice of server to play on is limited by the few online players that there are, something of a frustrating experience at first. Equally however, if there were more scoring areas, the action wouldn't be quite so focused. *Quid pro quo*.

Thanks to a wealth of customisable features, worldwide ranking and of course stable code, while *Clusterball* doesn't have much depth, it succeeds in offering a fun and original game. There's more to think about than in a simple deathmatch and it beats racing round and around a track, so if you're in the market for something quirky and sensibly priced, *Clusterball* should do the trick. Just make sure you put the ointment on before bedtime. PCZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Good value • Plenty of control and game options • It's certainly original

DOWNERS No real depth • Too easy to master

★★★★★

Take a break from the norm





The city maps are the best to play and don't suffer from excessive fogging.



Thankfully there are no monthly fees to pay.



The goal is in the centre of the grandstands.



The slightly dubious ball physics make baskets a rarity.



Look at that, just like a real football game.

PROBALL BETA 1.0

Requires full version of QIII Arena • Team Proball • www.planetquake.com/q3proball

Speedball Arena may be on its way, but *Anthony Holden* is way ahead of them

ON THE CD

The idea of a *Quake*-based ball game has always seemed like a good idea, but past efforts have rarely risen above the level of mildly amusing gib-strewn farce. *Proball* has finally changed all that, with a supremely playable simplicity that borders on genius. Created in the space of just three weeks, *Proball*'s masterstroke is twofold. Firstly, there's no weapons, no pickups and no killing, simply a standard gauntlet with which to perform tackles. Secondly, the ball has a bright golden glow, alleviating the problem faced by any first-person sports action game – that your lack of peripheral vision makes you lose track of the ball every five seconds.

What you're left with is a simple playing field with a goal at each end, be it a basketball hoop, a football net or some other receptacle, two teams of any size and a ferocious battle for goals. While this in itself is a winning formula, perhaps the crowning genius of *Proball* is the inclusion of a turbo gauge and teleport function, adding an element of skill and strategy that would otherwise be lacking. Critically, you can teleport back to your goal face in case of emergency, but only when your turbo gauge is full.

The main complaint about *Proball* at the moment is the inconsistent pitch quality. While the straight football and basketball styled affairs work well, the more complex bounce-pad and lava-strewn affairs tend to dilute the game's charm. While the game is fun, it is fairly insubstantial, and would benefit from enhancements, decent bot support for one. Then again, this is only a Beta… The game is also more enjoyable in the immediacy of LAN-play, which may account for the lack of interest in this mod online. There were only a few servers running it at time of writing, but hopefully a few tweaks will get the ball rolling, as it were.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Simple, addictive • Loads of fun • With six or eight players you've really got a game on your hands

DOWNERS Inconsistent pitch quality • Dubious ball physics • Fairly insubstantial • More fun on a LAN

★★★★★

Better than FIFA (4 stars for LAN-play)



Yes, this could be you.



The texture artists have been busy.



Joanne shows off her Cheerio gun.

NEO CAIRO BETA 4

Requires full version of Unreal Tournament • www.planetunreal.com/teamorbit

Tony Lamb, human-cyborg relations droid, at your service

ON THE CD

We've seen vehicle mods, flight mods, weapons, maps and more, but few have attempted to bring all these elements together. At a mere 45Mb you get a lot in there too, starting with one of the best selections of maps around. The raft of Deathmatch, Capture The Flag and Domination layouts totalling some two dozen maps in all (with some real gems in there) leapfrogs *Neo Cairo* instantly into the top bracket of *UT* mods, and that's before its other talents come into play...

To start with – and most exciting – are the mech-skins and usable vehicles. In *Neo Cairo* you have a choice between the traditional humanoid look or you can be a robotic "mech" instead, with a different set of weapons (check out the quad .50 calibre and rocket launcher combo for a start). Not only this, but if you choose the "pilot officer" skin and walk up to the computer stations in some maps, a usable vehicle will appear next to you. These include a fighter-style craft, bomber, jet-pack suit and more. Add a slew of new weapons, sounds and good use of *UT*'s bot family and *Neo Cairo* becomes an impressive mod.

At present, *Neo Cairo* lacks an online capability and the mech skins need better (and visible!) weapons and armour, but the team says these issues are addressed along with many new features in Beta 5, which is due soon. We can't wait.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Great maps • Usable vehicles • Mech skins

DOWNERS No online options as yet • Iffy vehicle physics • Best to come in Beta 5

★★★★★

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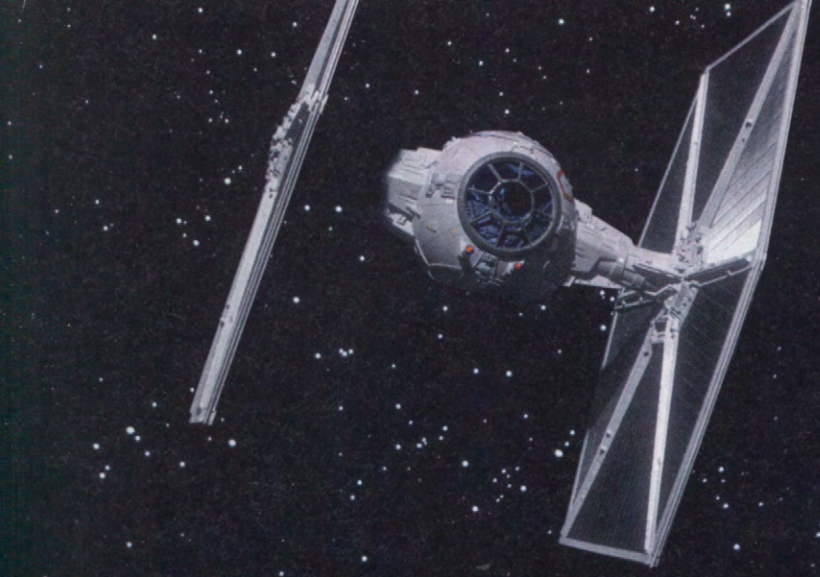
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FEEDBACK



Martin Korda* sifts through your views on some of the biggest and best releases from the last couple of months... and *Erotica Island

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Or you can email them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **Feedback** in the subject line

"I shall not be buying your magazine again and shall also advise my fellow inmates to steer clear of your half-witted attempts at games reviewing"

ARISTOTLE SIMPLETON GETS SARKY

MAX PAYNE

REVIEWED *PCZ* #107, Oct 2001
SCORE 90%

What we said

"*Max Payne* is innovative and highly polished, a game of wild ideas that has been properly focused to entertain – not to entertain forever, but certainly until the next big thing comes along."

What you thought

✪ *Max Payne* caught me out. No fanfare, no publicity, in fact I was so caught out I didn't get it until the Monday after its release, and what's more, it's one of the few games I've bought without having read your review of it first.

What can I say? The game is great fun, but without the Bullet Time feature it would have probably gone by with little mention. The crosshair is very small but that adds to the challenge – any bigger and the game would be too easy.

However, I was on one level when I found myself in a toilet, with a punk in the next cubicle. I nipped into the one beside him planning on shooting him through the wall, but had no luck. I dispatched him once he came after me, after which I went to check his side of the wall. There was no damage, and the bullet hadn't even passed through. Bullets also refused to go through doors, walls or even stuffed chairs, which is a bit lame.

This game could also be spiced up with an action replay feature. After slaying five assailants without getting a scratch I would really like to see my cool moves in a replay, perhaps from the bad guys' point of view, or an action cam.

Overall though, I'm enjoying playing what is an excellent game, and I hope *PC ZONE* supports it by carrying any user-created levels on future CDs.

Mike Agar



***Max Payne* is a brilliant game, but it's a little on the short side.**

✪ As one of those lucky enough to get my hands on a copy of the much anticipated and long delayed *Max Payne* on its release day, I felt I had to share my thoughts with you all, and what better forum to voice my views than the best PC games magazine in the land?

In a single word – *wow*. The wait was worth it. If you look past the no-brain revenge plot and the simplistic gameplay, rather reminiscent of *Syphon Filter* on the PlayStation, what you're left with is a game of subtle genius. It is the attention to detail that really makes *Max Payne* stand out from the crowd of third-person action/shooters.

Much has been made of the *Matrix*-style Bullet Time feature, which allows you to slow the action down while still being able to aim in real time. Admittedly this feature is essential if you want to progress in the game, but you can forget *The Matrix*. This is pure John Woo. If you're a fan of the Hong Kong maestro you'll be right at home here. The first time you get your timing right, diving across an open doorway, watching the bad guys' bullets sail harmlessly overhead and putting 17 rounds from your twin Berettas into the nearest crim will have you punching the air in an orgy of nihilistic bloodlust.

Even on my mid-spec (K6-2/500, 128Mb, 32Mb 3D card) machine, the whole thing clips along at a rare old pace, admittedly with most of the background detail turned down. Even so, it looks stunning, people's clothes actually look like clothes, the self-adjusting AI is spot on and means you'll never find yourself stuck anywhere for too long. All in all, I fell in love with *Max* at first sight and his twisted half-smile still haunts my dreams.

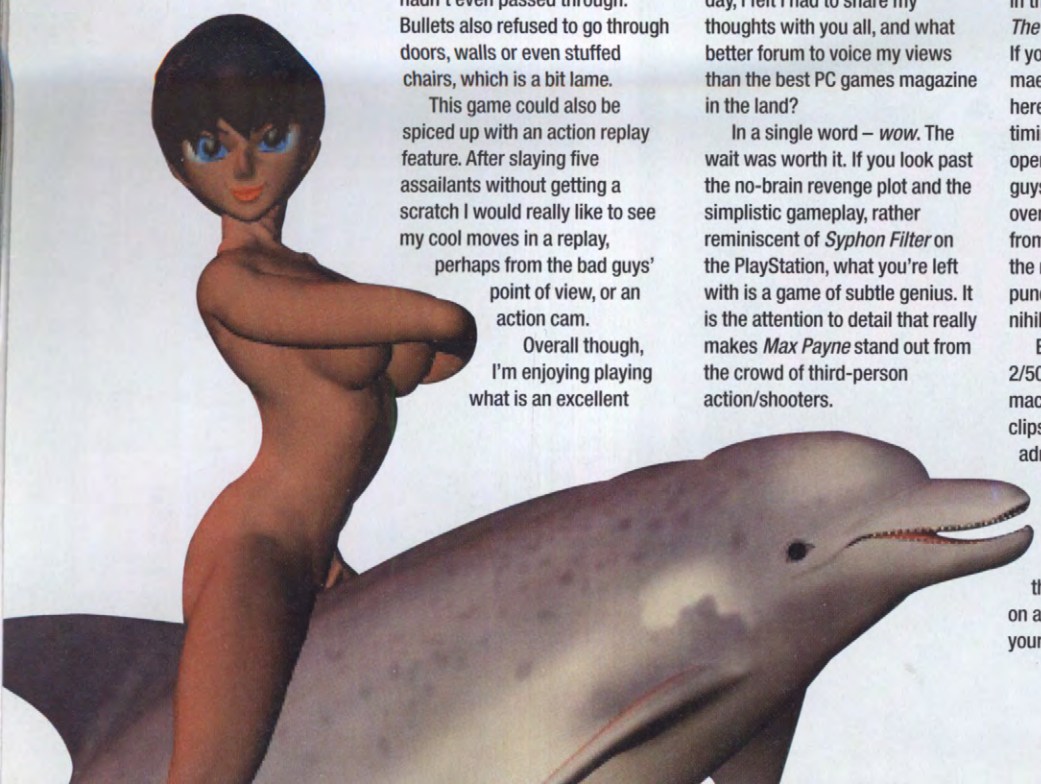
Andy Bell

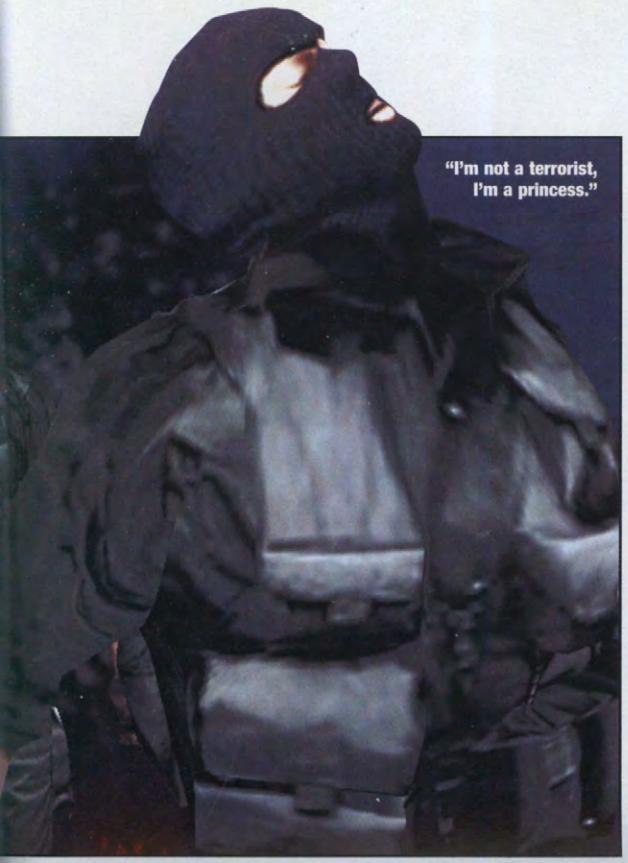
✪ I've just finished playing the best game since *Deus Ex*. I am of course referring to *Max Payne*. The only thing is I bought the game on Saturday (a day after its release), and by Tuesday lunchtime I'd finished it on Fugitive mode. Sure I could go back over the game on a harder difficulty level but what's the point if I know what's going to happen in it?

I just think that if you're going to have a game as good as that with all new technology that's built into it, then you should have a bit more time to use it.

On the upside it's got a lot going for it, the slo-mo dives and killings look really cool and on a high-spec PC the graphics are excellent. It has a strong storyline with unexpected twists and the way it creates its own difficulty level for you is extremely useful.

I'm not disappointed, I just feel slightly empty after spending 30




"I'm not a terrorist, I'm a princess."

quid only to see it completed in four days.

Nick Jones

Comment

It's an age-old question: how long does a top quality game need to be to warrant a £30 price tag? RPG fans are used to investing anything up to 100 hours into their favourite beard 'em up, but for many this is more off-putting than alluring.

On the other end of the scale, you've got the likes of *Half-Life: Blue Shift*, which can be easily completed in under three hours. Obviously there needs to be some kind of middle ground. The length of *Max Payne* was a subject of much heated discussion in the *PC ZONE* office, but in the end we decided that we'd prefer a ten-hour stunning and innovative game like *Max Payne* over an inferior game boasting 30 hours of average and clichéd gameplay.

***Max Payne* gained one of our rare *PC ZONE* Classic awards for its innovation, and is a hugely successful attempt at doing something a little new and original. And from what you've all been saying in your letters, it looks as though that score has been fully justified. And just to answer your question Mike, we will be running any new add-ons for it on our CDs as and when they appear.**

EROTICA ISLAND

REVIEWED *PCZ* #103, Jun 2001
SCORE 10%

What we said

"It might sound passable on paper (if you're 13), but the game is rendered virtually unplayable by an arcane interface, lengthy pauses in the action and repetition of dialogue to rival Eric Idle in *Discworld* in the frustration stakes."

What you thought

✪ Having purchased my first PC a couple of months ago for the purposes of gaming, I decided to buy a game magazine in order to select my first game. I chose *PC ZONE* issue 103. As Mother was waiting for me, I had a quick flick-through and on the back page found two games labelled *PC ZONE* Pants and *PC ZONE* Classic. I immediately bought *Erotica Island*.

Having just finished said game, I have come to the conclusion that I have been seriously misled. To make matters worse, I have recently seen *Half-Life* played on someone else's machine and it looks quite good.

I am writing this letter to inform you that I shall not be buying your magazine again and shall also advise my fellow inmates to steer clear of your half-witted attempts at games reviewing.

Aristotle Simpleton

Comment

What do you mean *Erotica Island* isn't any good? How can you not like a game with the worst dialogue in the history of gaming (and that includes *Arcatera*), pathetic graphics and non-existent gameplay? Not to mention the fact that it comes with two tissues and has loads of very badly drawn naked people in it. It's a Classic if ever we've seen one. How could anyone possibly think it's not better than *Half-Life*? You know nothing. Now go away.

TRAIN SIM

REVIEWED *PCZ* #106, Jul 2001
SCORE 80%

What we said

"The attention to detail is superb and, clichéd as it is, there's an undeniable thrill about pulling the whistle cord on the Flying Scotsman as you hurtle through the English countryside. Technically, there's no faulting it."

What you thought

✪ Relaxing. Exhilarating. Majestic. Just three words I could use to describe *MS Train Sim*. I eagerly awaited its arrival for many months, but always had a concern about a game on rails. Would it be too limiting? After playing it now non-stop for the past three days, I can assure you it is not. I have rescued a stranded passenger train, hauled goods through the night in a snow blizzard, shunted cargo cars through a massive network of junctions and sidings, and at one stage lost control of the train on a steep hill and smashed into a buffer at 50mph.

We will always have fast action games such as *Quake* and *Half-Life*, but *Microsoft Train Simulator* offers the player a comfortable slow-paced game where mastering the rails is not just a must, but also very enjoyable. I highly recommend this game.

Paul Boland

✪ Some people will say *Microsoft Train Simulator* is just for geeks, but look at how well it's been selling. Personally, I love it and have been playing it for more than a week. There are so many different things to experience (not that you'd believe it when you think you don't even have to steer). It's a really entrancing and relaxing game, and I think you were absolutely spot on with your review. Many thanks for not marking it down simply because of its theme. It's that sort of impartiality that makes me read your magazine above any others. Keep up the great work.

Daniel Boreham

Comment

Who would have thought it? A train simulation that is actually fun. When you think about it, though, it's not really all that strange. Just take a look at the success of *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2000*, in which you get to pilot a plane from one airport to the next (in real time), during which your most dangerous obstacle is the occasional stray pigeon, and you'll understand what I'm getting at.

***Microsoft Train Simulator*'s strongest feature is its realism. To a certain extent we all try to live out some of our dreams through games. Our very own Chris Anderson, gets to fulfil his boyhood fantasy of being an all-powerful bearded necromancer with a pointy hat and a ridiculous beard every time he plays *EverQuest*, while Rhianna regularly indulges her sadistic desires by torturing pixies in *Dungeon Keeper 2*. Then there's Steve Hill's well-documented obsession with *Championship Manager*. The same thing can apply to *Microsoft Train Simulator*, well sort of anyway. Its relaxing pace and attention to detail allows you to sit back and simply enjoy driving trains without the risk of getting beaten up by irate commuters.**


Possibly the most relaxing game in the world.

REALITY CHECK: FOOTBALL

In an attempt to improve his footballing skills, *Steve Hill* swaps joypad for shinpads and seeks professional help



VS



I can't play football for toffee. It's a sad fact that despite following the game avidly for years, and watching hundreds of matches, I am, and always have been, a resolutely poor player. In the words of Billy Bragg: "I never made the first team, I just made the first team laugh."

On the other hand, I am absolutely superb at football videogames. Give me a joypad and a comfy chair, and it all slots into place, intricate moves come off, passes reach their intended destination, and extravagant shots ripple the onion bag with unerring accuracy. Which brings us to the point of this feature. With football games reaching unrivalled levels of realism, can parallels be drawn with the real thing? Can proficiency with a pad be translated into supremacy with a ball? And what about the other way round? A few years ago, an *Actua Soccer 3* tournament saw the final contested by ex-Brentford player, Gus Hurdle, and then Sunderland striker, Michael Bridges, the only two footballers laying waste to a field of so-called professional gamers.

ALLEZ LES BLEUS!

Back to the future, and EA Sports is promising that the next version of *FIFA* will be the most realistic yet (until the next one). To this end they assembled an impressive array of international talent, past and present, at the French Centre Technique National Fernand-Sastre, essentially the headquarters from where the French national side plotted their world domination. As venues go, it's certainly a cut above Hackney Marshes, and a fitting location for a training session with some of football's greatest ambassadors. Each was assigned a module, intended to highlight aspects of the game, with points awarded for proficiency at each task.

> **"By this stage the heat is taking its toll, and the last thing we need is anything approaching exercise"**

First up is England World Cup hero, Alan Ball, charged with the task of teaching a bunch of ill-co-ordinated mules to pass the ball so it comes to rest within a circle of plastic discs. It's certainly different to holding down a button, but I prove to be reasonably adept. However, my claim that the last effort is over the line is dismissed by Ball on the basis that there's "no Russian linesman today."

Shooting is obviously a key aspect of football, both real and virtual, and former Chester City and Liverpool legend Ian Rush knows a thing or two about it. However, he fails to impart this knowledge, and my attempts at hitting cones on the goal-line prove almost entirely unsuccessful. Perhaps it'll be easier to score from the penalty spot. There's only one problem, and that's Spain and Real Madrid goalkeeper, Iker Casillas. I slowly and deliberately place the ball on the spot, staring hard into his eyes as I begin the run-up. Sensing his fear I feign towards the corner, and give it my best shot. The keeper doesn't move… as the ball floats harmlessly into his midriff. Shithouse.

FÜSSBALL'S COMING HOME

By this stage the heat is taking its toll, and the last thing we need is anything approaching exercise. Enter German World Cup winner, Lothar Matthäus, now reduced to overseeing journalists chipping balls over a five-a-side goal. After sternly interrogating me over my non-regulation Chester City away


"Get your filthy stinking paws off of me"

shirt, the action begins, with Lothar on the stopwatch, counting every ball with ruthless German efficiency. There is no let-up as he urges, "Come on, come on, quicker," making no friends among the rapidly flagging English contingent. Unfortunately (for him) he makes the mistake of briefly leaning his jaw against the crossbar. A stray ball smacks against it, felling him instantly. Seizing the opportunity, balls are rained down on the stricken German with newfound urgency: "That's for 1996! That's for 1990!" There's even a shout of "That's for 1970!" from a particularly embittered member of our squad as Lothar attempts to crawl out of the line of fire. We may not have scored the most points, but the moral victory was England's.

G'DAY, EA SPORT

As the inventor of the Predator boot, ex-Liverpool star Craig Johnston, is an authority on curling the ball. Getting this across to journalists more accustomed to applying swerve via a joypad is a different matter though, and Craig is offering a tenner to anyone who can curl in three shots from on or near the touchline. Remarkably, my first effort arcs impressively through the air and nestles in the back of the net. Even more remarkably, so does my second. With only the third – and easiest – shot remaining, the money is as good as mine. There's a twitch of uncertainty on the approach though, and it thuds agonisingly against the near post. Piss.


Steve Hill
Position: Horizontal
Caps: Only on his teeth
Career goals: All achieved

Throw-in practice and some leisurely dribbling with a bearded Mark Lawrenson rounds off the session, which is followed by a well-deserved gala lunch. It's a decent feed, but it's almost spat out when Matthäus turns up sporting what can only be described as a rather charming skintight floral T-shirt, the outfit completed with a sockless azure moccasins. A shout of "looking good" illicits a blood-curdling stare from the burly Bavarian, who is now rapidly losing patience with the English pig-dogs. That's the trouble with these Germans. No sense of humour. PM

HOW REAL IS FIFA 2001

Let the game begin

By default, *FIFA 2001* is the best football game on the PC, but that isn't necessarily enough in the land if of the Reality Check. OK, it certainly looks like football but as for recreating the experience of actually participating in the sport, it's still a completely different ball game.

For starters, there is a major fundamental difference, in *FIFA* you control all the players, whereas when you actually play football, you are only responsible for your own actions.

Furthermore, pressing buttons to carry out certain actions is a world away from swinging a leg or throwing your head at a fast moving sphere. Forgetting these factors *FIFA 2001* doesn't actually feel like football, and it's almost impossible to judge passing and shooting. Having spoken to EA officials, they're keen to point out that all of this is going to change in the 2002 version.

On the plus side, if you keep your footballing activities on the PC you don't get some over-competitive twat breaking your arm.



Not even Hill could miss from here.


Steve Hill shows a rare moment of skill.

THE LEGENDS SPEAK

It's looking like the most authentic version yet, but can being good at *FIFA* really be translated onto the football field? Mark Lawrenson?

"I think the stock answer to that would be no, because if you can't run and you're fat… nothing personal, I don't think that by being extremely good at playing *FIFA 2002* that it's going to transmit itself into making you a better player, but I think if it raises your awareness then fine. I think if it was toss-up between playing the EA game or going out and playing football, I know what I'd be doing."

Craig Johnston can see some benefits though: "I reckon you can learn shedloads strategically and tactically. One makes you learn the other, and the other makes you learn the other."

That's cleared that up then.


"Hmm, yes Steve that's very interesting."

GADGETS

More bright and shiny things to make you happy

M-SERIES MICRO PC

£880 • www.unbeatable.co.uk

No matter how much you love playing with your PC, you have to admit it can be a pain in the arse. Basically because it's just too damn big. Leave it on your desktop and it hogs most of the space, shove it under the desk and when you're not kicking it, you're crawling around on the floor trying to swap USB leads. It's almost enough to make you rush out and buy an iMac. (*Steady – Ed.*)

But what if we told you that you can have your PC for a fraction of the size? We're not talking laptops – we're talking about the M-Series. It's a PC, but not as you know it. On first glance you might think it's an oversized CD drive, but take a closer look and you'll discover a 933Mhz Pentium III processor, 128Mb of RAM and a 20Gb hard disk. There is also a 56K V.90 fax modem and DVD-ROM drive along with the usual range of ports you would expect on a new PC. These include serial and parallel ports, enabling you to hook up your PDA, MP3 player and printer, and two USB ports.

So other than its tiny dimensions, what makes the Micro PC different? Well, not a lot. And certainly nothing that can justify its high price tag, which doesn't include monitor or peripherals or a graphics chipset capable of belting out your favourite games. And then when you consider the machine isn't upgradeable, you seriously begin to doubt whether it's worth splashing out on. But it looks great, and it is very, very small. Perfect for the front-end of a Soho office, in fact. ✪✪✪✪✪





HYPERDRIVE

£149.99 • 01296 586203 • www.hyperdriveuk.com

What do you buy the spoilt Formula One-loving brat who has it all? If you're loaded you could try and appease him with the aptly named Hyperdrive, which provides the thrill of the chase and the smell of burning rubber with an all-in-one seat, frame and wheel combination.

It's the first gaming accessory of its kind on the market. We've had a variety of toys to play with over the years, but never something you can actually sit in. Or that takes up so much space in the front room. So it's good thing that it only takes a few minutes to assemble and dismantle, and once packed away it occupies a fairly small space (85cm x 60cm x 45cm if you're wondering).

And it's surprisingly light. Just one look at the large box it arrived in was enough to put our backs out, but its total weight is just 12.5kg. Inside the box you'll find an adjustable steel frame, pedals, seat and the all-important wheel – the classy padded seat cover is thrown in for free.

There are also plans to license the Hyperdrive for the Xbox and GameCube, so we could be seeing a lot of this little yellow car in the future. But is it really worth £140? If you like looking like a twat then the answer is most definitely yes. For everyone else it's a bit OTT, especially if you follow the exploits of the kid on the box and wear a flame-resistant suit and helmet. ✪✪✪✪✪

DVD REVIEWS

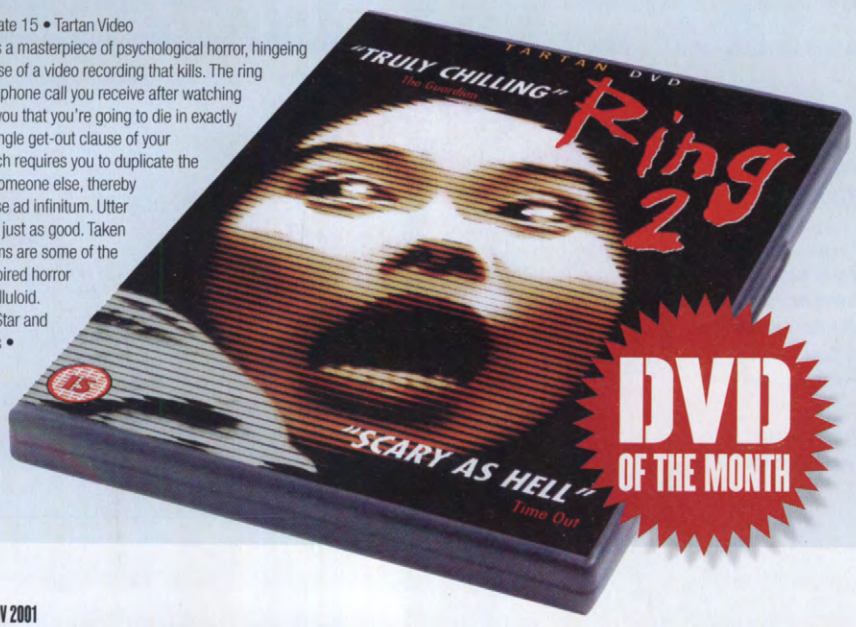
RING 2

✪ £18.59 • Certificate 15 • Tartan Video

The original *Ring* was a masterpiece of psychological horror, hingeing on the brilliant premise of a video recording that kills. The ring refers not only to the phone call you receive after watching the video (informing you that you're going to die in exactly one week), but the single get-out clause of your imminent death, which requires you to duplicate the tape and show it to someone else, thereby perpetuating the curse ad infinitum. Utter genius, and *Ring 2* is just as good. Taken as a pair, the *Ring* films are some of the most chilling and inspired horror ever committed to celluloid.

EXTRA FEATURES Star and director filmographies • Film notes by Asian cinema expert Tony Rayns • On-screen gallery • Original Japanese trailers

✪✪✪✪✪



ARMAGEDDON – COLLECTOR'S EDITION

✪ £24.99 • Certificate 15 • Buena Vista

And the difference between this new edition of the Bruce Willis blockbuster and the version released over a year ago? About ten of your earth pounds, a whole heap of special features and that Aerosmith song. The film itself – the director's cut no less – is as vacuous and forgettable as it always was, but on DVD the special effects really shine. If the likes of *Independence Day* got your juices flowing, then *Armageddon* will be right up your street.

EXTRA FEATURES Two commentaries • Deleted scenes • Storyboards • Special effects analysis • Production featurette • Aerosmith muck

✪✪✪✪✪



BELKIN F8E070U 65-PIECE TOOL KIT

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Throughout the ages man has invented tools. It seems there is something buried deep in the male psyche that urges him to build, to tamper, and often to destroy. Which is why when God created man, Belkin created the 65-Piece Tool Kit.

Designed for all electronic devices, it enables you to repair, maintain and upgrade your PC. And if you fancy yourself as a bit of a computer expert, it has every tool you could ever need for every job. Even if you know nothing about the inside of your machine, just owning one of these kits will make you feel master of your domain.

For everyday cleaning there's a mini-vacuum (oh yes), pressurised duster, cotton swabs and anti-static cleaning wipes. But for those who feel bold enough to tackle the bigger jobs there's a whole smorgasbord of tools for you to wreak havoc with. Chose from the soldering iron, 24-piece bit and socket set and wait for it… chip extractor. What more could a man ask for?

How about a shiny, black vinyl case to carry it all in? And with a special compartment for every special tool, you'll know if anyone's got their hands on your ratchet. It seems that Belkin has thought of everything, and added a few more extras just in case. The box dares you to 'master your environment', and who can resist that?

★★★★★





SONY CRX10U

£400 • 08705 111 999 • www.sony-cp.com

There's no doubt about it, the British love a bargain. If you can 'buy one, get one free', you'll happily ditch your faithful brand for the far cheaper – generally far nastier option. And it is for this very reason that when a gadget claims it can do two things in one, you should be suspicious. Three things? Don't even touch it. Until now. It's Sony that's taken on the three-in-one challenge, and come out unscathed. The CRX10U manages to perform as a CD player, CD burner (of both CD-Rs and CD-RWs) and MP3 player.

Not much bigger than your average Sony Discman, the CRX10U weighs a Kylie-sque 435 grams, and attaches to your PC (or Mac) via USB cable. It may not be the fastest CD-R/RW in town, but you can also create digital photo albums, Video CDs or just get your life in order and create back-up files. And with a CD-RW disc you've got a 650Mb hard drive.

But the real beauty of this product is that it doesn't stop when you leave your computer. Just unplug and go, and you've got a portable CD player, complete with LCD remote. And there's more. It can also read MP3 files, allowing a stonking ten hours of music per CD. Quite simply the CRX10U is one of the first CD players to combine the usability of a home product, with the versatility of a portable. ★★★★★

ERICSSON T39

£99.99 with contract • 08705 237 237 • www.ericsson.com

The T39 doesn't look robust enough for tombraiding, but it uses the same cutting-edge technology that Lara was seen sporting on her pouty little head – namely Bluetooth. Basically this enables gadgets to communicate with each other without wires. So your phone can transfer information to your PDA, your PC or any other Bluetooth enabled product.

The T39 supports GPRS (Global Packet Radio Service), which means its Internet service is always online, enabling faster surfing and data downloads. And you can send information straight from the phone to another platform. However, the major drawback of all this mind-boggling technology is that there are still very few Bluetooth gadgets on the market, so your phone will lead a lonely life with nothing to actually talk to.

The best thing is to keep it busy doing all the other tasks it was designed for. How about the calendar, which reminds you about your impending anniversary? Or the phone book which also lets you store addresses, company name, job title and alternative phone numbers for all those important people in your life? You can send text messages containing pictures and sound, using EMS (Enhanced Messaging Service). Or you could even just phone someone. And quite frankly, that's more than enough excitement for us to handle. ★★★★★



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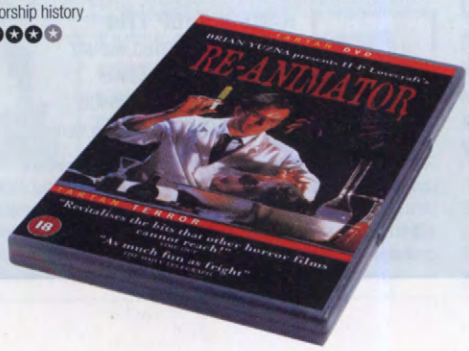
★ £14.59 • Certificate 18 • Tartan Video

If you're a recent convert to horror films, you'll have endured a glut of recent US releases that unsuccessfully attempt to blend scares and smiles on the same piece of celluloid. *Re-Animator* shows them how it should have been done, and if you weren't old enough to watch this first time around it's a must-see.

It's based around the exploits of mad professor Herbert West, who has discovered a serum that can bring corpses back from the dead. Fortunately, there's a horrific side effect, which leads to approximately an hour and a half of the best splatter ever to grace the small screen.

EXTRA FEATURES Star and director filmographies • Brian Yuzna notes • Censorship history

★★★★★



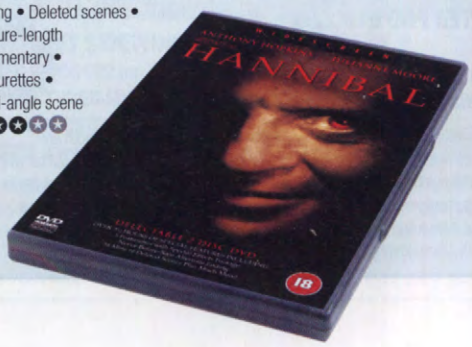
HANNIBAL

★ £21.23 • Certificate 18 • Columbia TriStar

Concerning the continuing exploits of the acceptable face of cannibalism, *Hannibal* is a faithful adaptation of the Thomas Harris novel, and herein lies the problem. The novel is pretty weak, something original star Jodie Foster obviously picked up on. Her part this time is played by Julianne Moore, and although Anthony Hopkins is as charismatic as ever, this film only picks up the pace in the final half hour. And, after the quite decent *Silence Of The Lambs* this has to be considered a major disappointment. Compensation on DVD comes from the extra disc, complete with over 3.5 hours of special features. Our advice though? Rent it from your video shop.

EXTRA FEATURES Alternate ending • Deleted scenes • Feature-length commentary • Featurettes • Multi-angle scene

★★★★★



REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

★ £18.59 • Certificate 18 • Momentum Pictures

If you thought *Trainspotting* was harrowing in its depiction of heroin sub-culture, then a revisit after *Requiem* might convince you that for all its pretensions Danny Boyle's Brit epic was nothing but a pop promo. If you want to find out what it's really like to experience true addiction without sacrificing your own body check this out, an unflinching and disturbing slice of heroin hell. It's not going to be everyone's cup of tea, but then neither are the consequences of what some still see as a relatively harmless pastime.

EXTRA FEATURES Director's commentary • Deleted scenes with director's commentary • Tappy Tippon's life story feature • Making-of *Requiem for a Dream* documentary • Interview with Ellen Burstyn • Anatomy of a scene • Trailer

★★★★★

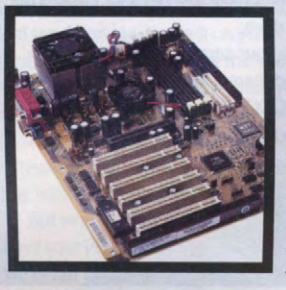


BUYER'S GUIDE

Is there ever a good time to upgrade? If you're looking for memory the answer is an emphatic yes. Check out www.crucial.com/uk where you can buy an extra 256Mb RAM from an unbelievable £26.99. *Tim Ponting* recommends you buy some immediately before the prices go up again. And they will

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £123, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Abit
TELEPHONE 01438 741999 **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

~~£180~~ £123

Thanks to a chap called Iain for pointing out that the Abit KT7A/KT7A-RAID motherboard is not listed as supporting 1.4GHz Athlon processors. In fact, this motherboard *will* support up to 1.4GHz processors provided you have a recent hardware version (v1.3 should be fine) and a BIOS above 3r02, which as yet is not finalised. In addition, the processor you buy must have its Level 1 bridges disconnected – you can't run an overclocked slower processor and pretend it's a 1.4 gigger. So if you're buying a new processor and mobo, the 1.4Ghz Athlon and Abit KT7A/RAID mobo should work fine together, provided you upgrade to the correct BIOS.

BEST BUDGET



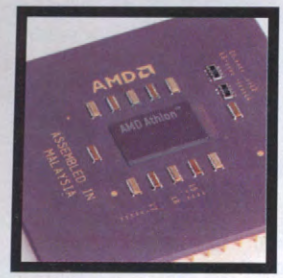
GIGABYTE GA-7ZXR REV 3
STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

~~£99~~ £92

A new entry here, now the GA-7ZM is not easily available anymore (though the 7ZMM version is). It's a bit more pricey, and offers the same benefits as the KT7A but at a lower pricepoint. It even has four-channel audio on board courtesy of the Creative Labs CT5880 PCI chipset. Make sure you go for the Rev 3 board if you're paying this kind of price.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY

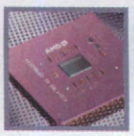


AMD 1.4GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £117
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803100 **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

~~£180~~ £117

You can now buy a 1.4GHz Socket A Athlon for the miserly sum of £117, from Dabs.com in the UK. Athlon is still clearly the processor of choice for the gamer, at least until there's good reason to buy multi-processor motherboard/CPU combos for gaming. The 1.4GHz Athlon is a screamer, and unbelievably cheap for the performance it offers. As Athlons over 1GHz are only available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. Bear in mind that you'll need to fit a hefty fan to keep the beast cool, and that it should fit properly. It may tangle with components on the motherboard or the PSU if it's the wrong shape.

BEST BUDGET



AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £43, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY



IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Gb
STREET PRICE £110, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE 0800 169 1458 **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

Though increasingly difficult to find in capacities less than 75Gb, the Deskstar 75GXP range is simply superb. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time of less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need £230 to buy such a beast.

BEST BUDGET



SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb
STREET PRICE £66, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents. Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY



IIYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in
STREET PRICE £628
MANUFACTURER iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

~~£675~~ £628

I've been a devotee of iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old, yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2048x1536.

BEST BUDGET



HANSOL 710P 17in
STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUDGET



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB

STREET PRICE £92 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

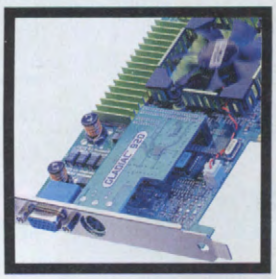
The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clockspeed as opposed to 115MHz. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two. The Herc has 64Mb and costs a few quid more… Dammit, you choose.

BEST BUY

ELSA GLADIAC 920

STREET PRICE £286, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE 0800 056 3445 **WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

The card that's been Best Buy for the last four months is now available to buy, and with the new NVIDIA drivers, it kicks ass. The 32-bit colour performance is cool, the FSAA (full scene anti-aliasing) is blinding, and it's got all the nifty DX8 features you could want. We love it, and its price has dropped again from the ridiculously high RRP. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think and comes with a full, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.



SOUND CARD

BEST BUDGET



HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II

STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
PHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

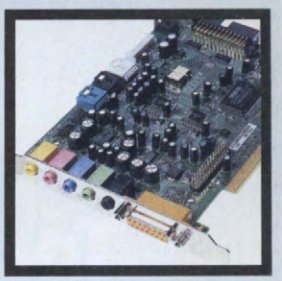
This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money, is a good performer, and comes with a generous software bundle. Its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY

STREET PRICE £62, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 52 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.



HEADPHONES

BEST BUDGET



MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB

STREET PRICE £49.99, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our current best buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet as you ply them with rockets or sharp objects from an AK-47. It works very well, and as they double as a more-than-decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.

BEST BUY

SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551 **WEBSITE** www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *EastEnders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light – weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price.



CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET



TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32

STREET PRICE £72, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225235
WEBSITE www.teac.co.uk

~~£87~~ £72

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without a hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Make sure you shop around and you're laughing all the way to dubiously legal compilations…

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A

STREET PRICE £137, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522 **WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

~~£149~~ £137

Another one of those hardware recommendations based on experience. We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines, both at home and at work, and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on…



JOYSTICKS

BEST BUDGET



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Despite the grungy website and horrible joysticks of yesteryear, Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and infinitely adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled, even among more pricey competition.

BEST BUY

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

~~£85~~ £62

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but if you are interested, nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it – I suspect my missus likes it for that reason alone. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.









NATO ATTACKS GULF.
368 CASUALTIES.

Top News. Sept 30th 2001.

Actual weapons. Actual armies. Actual political issues.

Secret UN research proves oil resources are depleting.
OPEC wishes to hoard the fuel.
The UN wants to share reserves across the globe.
Conflict is inevitable.

- 30 epic missions of courage and honour
- Fully 3D war terrain and units
- Map Editor to build your own war game
- Electronic battle systems: communications tapping, photo stream capturing
- Kamikaze and STEALTH-units
- Online gaming

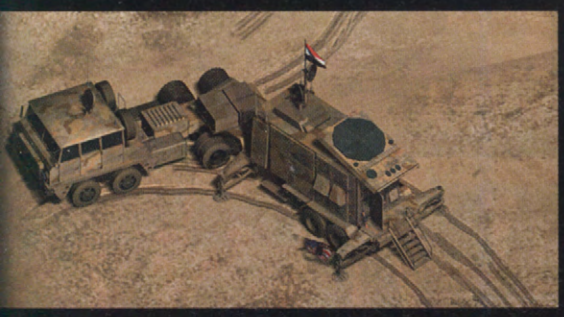
Reality pump

PC CD ROM

WWW.WORLD-WAR3.COM

JoWooD Productions

www.jowood.com



WORLD WAR III
BLACK GOLD

"WWIII: Black Gold will pump your oil because... It's astonishingly detailed"
PC Gamer Oct 2001

"Armchair generals may well have something to get excited about"
PC Gameplay Sept 2001.

"It all really does look great"
PC Strategy Player Sept 2001.

COMING UP OCTOBER 12TH 2001






ENDZONE

CHEATMASTE

Riding High

MOUTHING OFF Rhianna Pratchett



You've had the new-look Bulletin section, and this time it's EndZone's turn to be given a new dress and sent off into the world happily swinging its basket of goodies. But don't worry because all the regulars are still here: Dear Wandy, Watchdog, Extended Play etc. although I have taken over the reins of Dear Keith and Cheatmaster, so please address any gaming problems you have to, unsurprisingly, 'Dear Rhianna' and I shall try my utmost to ease your gaming woes.

On page 132 Anthony Holden catches up with the crown prince of management sims, Demis Hassabis, who crafted *Theme Park* in his tender teenage years and who is now playing with his new baby *Republic: The Revolution.*

My gripe this month is the fact that the *ZONE* team wouldn't let me call Cheatmaster Cheatmistress, because apparently 'Mistress' doesn't have anything to do with games. Although I claimed I could take them to certain London club nights that would prove otherwise, they were not to be swayed. Which is a shame, as I think Dave would look great in my thigh high black rubber boots. But who knows, if you find the right website, the pictures might just be out there already.

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Phil Wand



Anthony Holden



Keith Pullin

More cheap tricks for all you dirty cheating varmints

SHOWING YOU THE WAY Rhianna Pratchett

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, ***PC ZONE***, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line

CONFLICT ZONE

Ubi Soft

Activate the chat window during the game by pressing 'C', then type:

WIN	Win mission
REPLAY ALL MISSIONS	Access all missions
MY TAYLOR IS RICH	You gain 20,000 points and 100 per cent popularity

ARCANUM (DEMO VERSION)

Vivendi

Lost your way? We give you all the map co-ordinates you'll need for the demo version.

STONEWALL RANGE

Torin Quarry	W1420, S1100
Torgs Altar	W1214, S1139
Crash Site	W1452, S1292
Arbalahs House	W1453, S1304
Shrouded Hills	W1409, S1306
Simon Fahrkus- Shack	W1452, S1326
Black Root	W1097, S1442
Wolfs Cave	W1230, S1532
Liams Workshop	W1181, S1466
Ancient Maze	W1368, S1585
Tarant	W937, S1027
Derholm	W1238, S1652
Razor Points	W1503, S1771
Hardins Pass	W1289, S712
Stone Cutter Clan	W1342, S887
Wheel Clan	W954, S667
Still Water	W1191, S754
The Black Mountain Mines	W1308, S755

MORBIHAN PLAINS

Ancient Temple	W775, S917
Vooriden	W871, S1191
Elven Ruins	W712, S1022
Forbidden Pit	W833, S1032
Kree	W635, S1203
Ashbury	W506, S987
Ancient Shipwreck	W500, S891
The Lair of Bellerogrim	W769, S839

ISLE OF DESPAIR

Shades Beach	W374, S826
The Women's Camp	W268, S823
The home of Maximilian	W321, S837

GLIMMERING FOREST

Falcon's Ache	W1327, S562
Quintarr	W1546, S657
Small Pond	W1596, S881
Small Camp	W1262, S477
T\'sen Ang	W1507, S297
Secret Village	W1320, S181
The Poachers Camp	W1207, S275
The Bedokaan Village	W1179, S315

GREY MOUNTAINS

Kerlin's Altair	W883, S423
The Bog	W1077, S514
Strange Pond	W620, S526

LEFT CONTINENT

Broken Cathedral	W1630, S1206
The Old Lagoon	W1694, S1320
The Cold Place	W1612, S1414
Rosen borough	W1749, S1514
Bold\'s Altar	W1626, S1635
Caladon	W1606, S1828

STARTOPIA

Eidos

To enable the 'Right Shift' key for cheats, hold down 'F11' and type 'RSHIFT and a VAL will drop a random message to show you've been successful.

Speed

'F11' + type 'RSHIFTSPEEDUP'

Enable speed up mode (two msgs from VAL will drop down during this)

Hold 'Right Shift' plus

- **>** Speed up
- **<** Slow down
- **L** Normal speed

Scuzzer Cameras

'F11' + type 'RSHIFTSCUZZERCAMP'

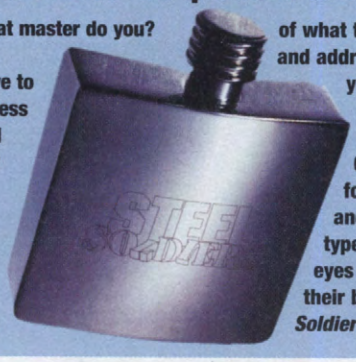
Allows you to flip through the cameras (two msgs from VAL will drop down during this)

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure you include all your correct details, so if you win we know where to send your special prize. This month's winner is James Cringlington, from Leicester with his cheat for *SWAT 3*. While in the game press 'Shift' and '~' to access the console screen then type 'casual' and cover any young children's eyes because your team will run around in just their boxers. James wins this nifty *Z: Steel Soldiers* hip flask for all his liquid emergencies.



DEAR WANDY
Problems with your parts? Just ask Wandy for a bit of help
P.114

FEATURE
Game and Able: being disabled doesn't mean you can't play games
P.118

RETROZONE
What we're going to do right here is go back... back into time
P.136

EXTENDED PLAY
Maps, mods and utilities for Unreal Tournament and Dungeon Keeper 2
P.142



Hold 'Right SHIFT' then

NP_7	forward
NP_8	backward

FIFA 2001
Electronic Arts

In the main menu type...

Gimmiethemoney	Adds money
Bigheads	Big head mode
Playersmaybe	Free players
Lightsout	Players become radioactive in darkness
Playersarelocked	Stops opposing players moving
Dizzy	Aliens drop down

THIEF 2: THE DARK PROJECT
Eidos

Cash

Add the line 'cash_bonus n' (n representing the amount) to the dark.cfg file to increase or decrease cash levels at the start of missions.

Bypassing the No Killing rule

Edit the USER.cfg file, by first making a copy of the file, then adding the following lines 'cheats_active', 'nokillgoalcheat' which will override the no killing restrictions on some of the missions. Carnage is yours.

Skip to Next Mission

'Ctrl + 'Alt' + 'Shift' +'End' Skips current mission.

ECHELON
Akaei

To access the console screen use the '`' key and type

End mission by hitting Esc

srv_success1	Win mission
srv_hero1	God mode

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE DOMINION WARS
Vivendi

Damage Enemy Ships

Select an enemy ship and anchor your camera to it and you can slowly damage the little bastards by pressing 'Ctrl'+'Shift'+'Del'.

MAX PAYNE
Take 2 Interactive

Access the game console, by starting maxpayne.exe with the command line parameter "-developer". With the game running in developer mode, you can access the console window by pressing 'F12'. To exit the console screen hit 'F12' twice

Coder	God mode, unlimited weapons/ammo etc
God	God mode
Mortal	God mode off
Getallweapons	All weapons
Getinfiniteammo	Infinite ammo
Getpainkillers	Receive eight pain killers
jump10	High jump (can be set to 20/30 etc)
GetBulletTime	More slow-motion
GetBaseballbat	Receive baseball bat
GetBeretta	Receive beretta
GetBerettadual	Receive dual beretta
GetIngramdual	Receive dual ingrams
GetSawedShotgun	Receive sawn off shotgun
GetMP5	Receive MP5
GetIngram	Receive ingram
GetJackhammer	Receive jackhammer
GetPumpShotgun	Receive pump- action shotgun
GetDessertEagle	Receive dessert Eagle
GetColtCommando	Receive colt commando
GetMolotov	Receive Molotov cocktail
GetGrenade	Receive grenades
GetSniper	Receive sniper rifle
GetHeath	Regain 100% health
SetWoundedState	Walk as if wounded
SetNormalState	Walk normally
GetM79	Receive M79



DEAR RHIANNA

Rhianna Pratchett wipes away your troubled gaming tears

DEAD AND IN THE WAY

Q I need help to complete the third level in *Thief* called Down In The Bonehead. How do I get past the undead into the Halls of Echoing Repose?

Brian Chamberlain, Herts

A **There's no need to be sneaky here, as the undead are fairly slow and dumb, so you can run past them and into the Halls of Echoing Repose, without sustaining much, if any, damage. Once you're in there, go to the right side of the room and take the right exit, keep going right (the undead will follow you but you can easily outrun them). Go into the room with the stone ramp and exit via the ladder.**

MONKEY BUSINESS

Q I am currently playing the very impressive *Escape From Monkey Island* but I am totally stuck early on. My problem is that I can't find Peg-Nosed Pete in the Mysts of Tyme. I have searched for ages but can't find him anywhere. On the way round Guybrush mentions a map and a compass. Do I need one of these? If so please tell me where I can get them. This is driving me crazy.

Jonathan Tait, Lincoln

A **Right this is quite complicated, so bear with me. Fill the empty cologne bottle with water from the fountain, add the wood shavings, the flower from Mandrill's Mansion, water from the swamp and some of the free bait. Use your concoction on Dave the owner of the prostheses shop and he will tell you the real name of Peg-nosed Pete. This name changes each game, but it will be a first name, a middle initial and a last name and you need to use the first letter of each part of the name in the Filing Machine. The code is Rabbit = A-D, Palm Tree = E-H, Pumpkin = I-M, Monkey = N-S, Banana = T-Z. Steal the clock from the pirates and use it to navigate the raft with the info you get from the filing cabinet. Simply match up the time with the direction specified and you should reach Peg-nosed Pete in no time.**

BETHANY BLUES

Q I am at the end of *Clive Barker's Undying* and despite the fact that I'm scared witless, nothing seems to be happening. I have met Bethany and she has transformed, I killed the two priestesses and then nothing happens. Bethany just hovers there not attacking and I hit her with everything I've got but she won't die. Any help would be appreciated.

Andy Bisp

A **This can be easy if you know what you're doing and a bugger if you don't. Bethany can only be hurt while she's summoning creatures, so dispatch her minions with a skull storm and nip in there quick and give her a seriously severe haircut with the Scythe of Celt.**

DEAD EASY?

Q I know this sounds pretty wet for all you hardened gamers, but how on earth do I kill the 'Magician' at the end of *The House Of The Dead*. I manage to get the life bar down to half before being killed, but despite playing it over and over again I have no idea what I'm hitting to drain his energy. Help, please?

Mike Kelly

A **This is a tough baddie. Basically, his weak spots are the black wiry areas outside his blue armor, particularly his upper left arm and his lower right arm. Try and hit his weak spots before he sends out his force wave and then concentrate on hitting his fireballs. Duck, weave and keep on hitting the hotspots and he'll be toast.**

DEAR WANDY



A problem aired is a problem repaired. So don't be bashful, tell Wandy your troubles and he'll be certain to help you out

NOT WRONG Phil Wand

GOT A QUERY, DEARIE?

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50.

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type-thing. And as an extra incentive, we're offering a cool £50 to the reader who sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip every month. No, really. Send as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk **with the subject heading Dear Wandy**

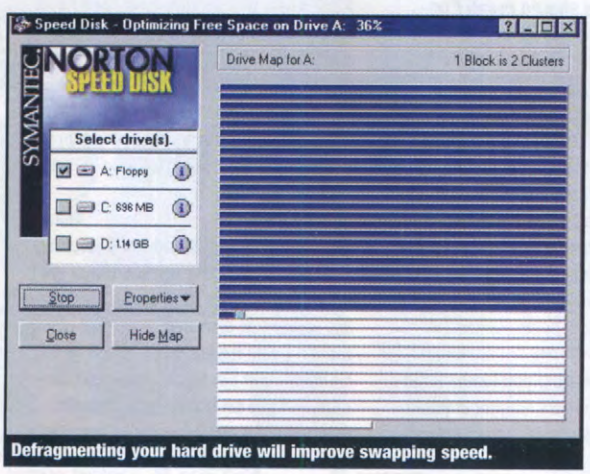
Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

OLD TIMER

Q Two years ago I bought my Mesh 350MHz, with 64Mb RAM, 8Gb HDD, and 8Mb Hercules S3 AGP graphics card. For £900 I felt I was getting a relatively cutting edge machine for 2D artwork and 3D gaming. Recently I bought the almighty *Black & White* for which my system has the minimum requirements, and yes, with the settings at low-res, low detail and 16-bit colour, it can just about be played with a considerable amount of bump and grinding from the hard disk. Often the whole thing stops dead to seemingly think the situation over, leaving me twiddling my thumbs. I've heard that defragging the HD is a good idea – I started doing it some time ago, but after ten minutes and zero per cent completion I gave up. OK, I realise my system is far from cutting edge and I'm prepared to spend a little on sharpening things up a bit, without upgrading the motherboard or the RAM, just the graphics card. Is this possible? My system has an Intel 440BX AGPSET motherboard, and the graphics card is AGP so I'm wondering if I could buy something like a Hercules Prophet 4500 AGP to replace my existing card? Will I notice £130 worth of difference?

JA

A The inescapable truth here is that your whole system is undernourished. It would, in my opinion, be futile to fatten up one area – just the graphics card, just the processor, whatever – in the hope that it would have a knock-on effect and make *Black & White* more playable. You can swap out the old Hercules S3, but I really can't see it making much of a difference, as you'd need 128Mb RAM and a 800MHz CPU to go with it. Of course, the Hercules Prophet 4500 will be instantly portable to your next machine, so in that respect it is the more sensible, long-term investment. With regard to maniacal hard drive activity, that's because you haven't got enough RAM – Windows is effectively suffocating and so is thrashing your hard drive space for breathing room. If you refuse to up your memory, keep plugging away at the defrag as it'll improve performance markedly.



Defragmenting your hard drive will improve swapping speed.

MOFO MOBO

Q I own a Packard Bell computer with 64Mb RAM, an NVIDIA TNT2 graphics card, and an AMD K6-2 400. Now because of the release of the Pentium IV, I want to upgrade to a Pentium III, which thanks to supply and demand have dropped in price considerably. But I've been told that I need to buy a new motherboard, could you recommend a good one that is not too pricey?

Anthony Dunphy

A Bang for buck, you can't do much better than an Abit BX133-RAID. It supports all Pentium III and Celeron socket-based processors and can be yours for less than £80. It features 1xAGP, 5xPCI, and 1xISA slots, although you'll need to buy new memory – the new board uses 168-pin SDRAM DIMMs. It also offers easy to use, on-screen overclocking, two USP ports and Redundant Array of Independent Disks (RAID) where the operating system 'sees' multiple hard drives as one, large logical disk, leading to improved hard drive performance and reliability. In short, it's the one you want.

PORTABLE GAMER

Q I am hoping to buy a laptop, and have my eye on a shiny new Dell Inspiron PIII 1GHz, 128Mb RAM, GeForce2 and so on. But will I get the same gaming experience from a similar desktop? I don't actually mind the small 15in screen size – it's what I'm used to – I'm just worried that it'll be obsolete the minute it arrives. Can I be sure games won't suddenly require millions and millions of GHz to run properly? Also, my old machine, a Gateway P200, 32Mb RAM, 5Gb drive space, 33.6 modem, keeps jamming up when I'm on the Internet, the screen freezes, and I have to 'Ctrl-Alt-Delete' three times to wrestle the thing back from unconsciousness. I'm thinking it's a program or memory error. Sometimes I get the 'Blue Screen Of Death' telling me "Modem error. The DSP could not be uploaded". It has caused severe frustration and cracks are appearing on the side of the monitor due to collisions with my fist, please help.

"Cracks are appearing on the side of the monitor due to collisions with my fist"

EOGHAN CAMPION, HAS AN INCIDENT WITH HIS PC

Eoghan Campion

A A modern laptop is fine for games, don't let anyone tell you otherwise. There was a time when weedy display technology combined with a fun-size CPU meant your portable PC was strictly for word-processing and that the desktop had all the fun, but nowadays the specifications are seriously beefy. I have a Dell Latitude, which, although something of an office donkey, is still capable of running *Team Fortress Classic*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Total Annihilation*. The only downside with my machine is that it's a NT Workstation, and as the latest versions of DirectX require Windows 98, ME or 2000, my choice of games is a little restricted. Do try to use the Dell machine before you buy it, because the keyboard layout is rather different to what you're used to – action games that require a great deal of manual dexterity on a desktop require contortionist skills on a laptop. As for your Gateway trouble, it sounds as though you have an old soft modem, which requires its digital signal processor (DSP) to be controlled by the host's CPU. Put simply, they're no end of grief, and you should 'out' it as soon as you can.

ONE IN THE SLOT

Q In your August issue, a chap called Chris Bundell mentioned a converter that allows Socket based AMD processors to work on Slot A motherboards. Well, I'm stuck needing one as my motherboard (Abit KA7 Slot A) blew and took out my CPU as well. I got the motherboard replaced, but they wouldn't replace the chip. As no one sells the chips any more, I was wondering if you know where I could buy a converter? Also, could I ask where you get your prices for the Buyers' Guide section, because 90 per cent are way over the top. For example, you gave a price of £115 for a 30Gb HD, but I only paid £105 at Christmas for a 45Gb. Your price for the 17in Monitor is £55 more than I, and most people, can get new.

Jamie Stockdale

A People are talking about the Socket-A to Slot-A converters for AMD processors, myself included, but as yet none are available commercially. While AMD doesn't deny such a converter is technically possible, it's highly unlikely it will ever produce one. The corporate line is to move everyone over to the new Socket-based chips – and so it comes down to third party



This fan fits into a spare ISA slot and blows hot air out of the case. Cool.

manufacturers, such as those supplying Socket-370 to Slot-1 converters for Intel hardware. My advice: forget the converter, as it's unlikely to become available within your time scale, and find yourself a replacement Socket 7 chip. Scan Computers at www.scan.co.uk is still listing the K6-2 for £32. As for prices in the Buyers' Guide section, I assure you that if we were to list the cheaper, so-called 'street' prices for hardware, we'd have a never-ending list of complaints from readers unable to match all the rock-bottom, bargain basement price tags we were printing. Instead we check a selection of the best sites and work out a sensible 'street average'.

CHILL OUT

Q I'm looking to upgrade from a PIII 500 to a new motherboard and Athlon 1.3GHz. I know everything I need – 300W PSU, new heat sink, and what have you, but one thing nobody seems to be able to tell me, and never seems to be covered in any magazines, is how many additional fans these top end processors require. Some have told me none, as long as the PSU has two built in fans, whereas others have suggested three extra fans built into the case. This is really puzzling me and more importantly putting my upgrade plans on hold. I would therefore appreciate any advice on a great deal.

S Foster

A **The importance of proper cooling cannot be overstated. If you intend taking advantage of the latest technology and supersonic clock speeds, you need to get the temperature of your processor, and indeed of everything inside your case, as low as you can. For that you need fans, sometimes lots of them. If you have other heat-generating hardware inside the case, for example a CD burner, the name alone lending a clue as to how hot it gets, then you'll need at least two. As for providing you with the exact number required, I cannot say, as each setup is different. Buy your hardware (go for a dual-fan 350W or 400W PSU and not the single-fan 300W), ensure you have a layer of heat compound between your Athlon and its cooler, and fire it up. Keep an eye on the temperature – the latest motherboards will report it back to Windows – and add new fans as you need them. Decent ones cost no more than £10 each.**

ONE IN THE SLOT

Q I have two PCs networked over a 10/100 Ethernet connection and a cable modem. The machine connected to cable is a 900MHz Athlon, running Win 98 SE, the other is a Celeron 450 running Win ME. I am using WinGate 2.0 to allow the second machine access to the Internet. My problem is that I can't seem to allow both machines to simultaneously access the Internet to play games such as *Unreal Tournament*. Should I change the WinGate to something else, or am I just being ignorant of how networking and cable modems operate?

Simon Jones

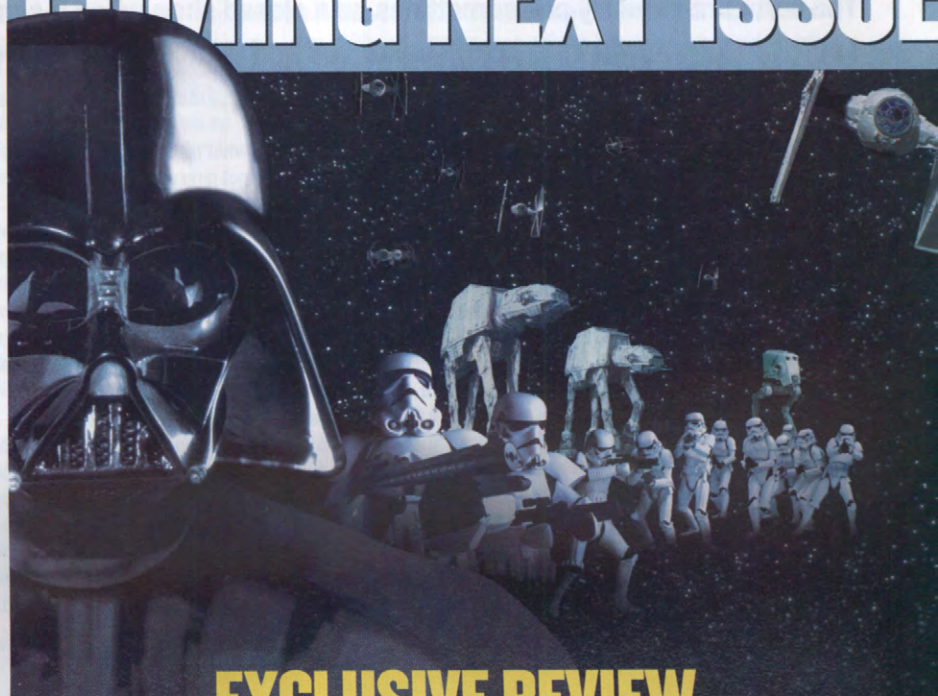
A **Short answer? Ditch WinGate. Have a look at Zyxel's Prestige 944, which allows up to four PCs on your network to access the Internet using a single cable connection. The Prestige 944 is basically a cable-friendly version of their ADSL Prestige 643 router, a piece of kit I can't recommend highly enough to BTopenworld users. No fussing about with proxy configurations, and you should be able to pick one up for less than £200. See** www.zyxel.co.uk **for more information.** PCZ



Give PCs on your LAN easy access to the Internet over cable.

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE



EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS

It's back to the golden age of the Empire as Star Wars strikes back onto PC

FIRST LOOK

BATTLEFIELD 1942

If you like Wolfenstein and Medal Of Honor, you'll love this

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

WARRIOR KINGS, SPIDER-MAN, IL-2 STURMOVIK, F1 2001, CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS, MAYBE EVEN AVP2

DEMOS

MAX PAYNE, STRONGHOLD, SPIDER-MAN PLUS COUNTER-STRIKE V1.3 AND THE LATEST SOLDIER MODS

ON SALE THURSDAY OCTOBER 18

WATCHDOG



The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers

PROBING FOR ANSWERS Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

We're here to help. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk **with the subject heading Watchdog**

GOING BALLISTIC AT BT

Q After reading *PC ZONE* for over a year, I've seen how many people you have helped. Now I need you to help me! About two months ago, BTInternet sent me an email saying they were upgrading my account to BTAnytime. I had not asked for this but thought that having more time to play *Counter-Strike* could not be a bad thing.

The first few days of using Anytime were great. I was getting a 60 ping rate on my ISDN, which was excellent. Then ever since that day no matter what time I go online, I always get ping rates of 110 to 130. I thought this was bad so I reported the fault to BTInternet's support email address.

They came back with an answer that had nothing to do with the problem I reported. I thought it might just be my line so I downloaded the Barrysworld dial-up but I still got those 60 pings again. So it's nothing to do with my line, but BTInternet won't accept it's to do with their ISP.

Now two months later (and more than 16 emails to their support team) and the problem still isn't fixed – they've conned me out of 30 quid for a shoddy connection. To make matters worse, during the last few days after 8pm, if I use Anytime, I get a ping rate of 300 on ISDN. I've spoken to many people who have the same problem. Please help.

SGtDeAtH

BTinternet Anytime

Anytime, anywhere. But very slowly if Sgt. Death is correct.

A Ho-hum! 16 emails, eh? Punters seem to be having a hard time of it this month actually getting a response from customer services – see the following letter for a further example. In the meantime, we contacted BTInternet to see if they could shed any light on the situation: "We are sorry to hear that the customer has experienced difficulties with his service," says Tony Henderson, head of media relations at BTopenworld. "To enable us to try and help the customer further, BTInternet will contact the customer direct to try and establish more information and the possible cause of the problem."

Apparently, they have been trying to get in touch with you via email but have had no joy so far. Watchdog though has been assured though that your problem will be dealt with. Let us know if it ain't!

TELLING OFF TELEWEST!

Q I am an avid *Counter-Strike* player and have also been a loyal Telewest customer for over five years. I decided to take advantage of Telewest's promotion of its high-speed Internet access and upgraded (or so I thought) to an always-on

BTopenworld WITH BTINTERNET

Problems with BTopenworld, which is more like a closed shop for one reader...

DELL-VING INTO THE PROBLEM

WELCOME TO DELL™

Heaven or Dell? Nik has been frustrated by the problems with his Dell computer...

Speak to me...

Q In October 1999, I bought a Pentium III PC from Dell through their Internet service and was pleased with the computer's performance. After 10 months, I started having problems with one of the fans on the back of the PC. It worked intermittently and was very loud. I phoned Dell and they told me to monitor the situation. I realised it was the fan extracting heat away from the processor and over a period of a month, games and processor-intensive applications started freezing but CD music kept playing.

A good friend who's a PC expert looked at it, and he said he thought the fan was doing damage to my processor by not extracting the heat. I went back to Dell but they blamed the software for the problems. My argument was though that if all intensive games were freezing while using all the latest drivers, and if I had several different things running at once (e. Word, Win Amp etc), it would freeze as well, therefore it wasn't down to the software.



Overheating and freezing up – we assume that Nic's PC problem is an exception to the rule...

My problem now though is that my on-site warranty ran out after a year. I still have a collect-and-return policy, but as far as I'm aware they should fix it on-site – as the on-site warranty was still valid when the problems actually began.

So at the moment, I'm trying to complete *Deus Ex* on 640 x 480 resolution with textures as low as possible or else the computer freezes up. I'm now getting tired of 'monitoring' the situation and just want the machine to be working at an optimum performance once again.

Nic Taylor

A It's a bad situation to be in especially if you're a gamer in the middle of blast and the whole thing locks up. We're sure it isn't doing your computer any good either because it needs to be constantly rebooted after it hasn't been shut down properly. We can only begin to imagine how many Scandisks you've had to run over the past few months.

Watchdog went off to Dell to find out exactly what's been going on, and to see if they would indeed be prepared to send out an engineer to your gaff despite that on-site element of your warranty being out of date: "Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to Mr Taylor's letter," says a spokesperson for the company. "Our customer relations department are currently working with Mr Taylor to ensure that the issue is resolved to his satisfaction. We do realise that in this instance Mr Taylor did not experience the level of customer service for which Dell is renowned and sincerely regret any inconvenience caused."

They go on to say that they reckon they have one of the "best and most efficient post-sales service in the industry – consisting of award-winning telephone and online support and backed up by a range of on-site warranty options."

All well and good, but are they achieving everything they could be when it comes to their customer services? "We also believe there is always room for improvement, and our teams work hard to continually refine the way we work to strive for an even better overall experience for our customers,' states Dell. "Our goal is to deliver a quality customer experience and we welcome and follow through on feedback received from our customers."

Good to hear. In the meantime, Nic, by the time you read this, your computer should be flying along without suddenly freezing. Enjoy *Deus Ex*! We did...

cable modem – mainly to use for online gaming.

I have had said modem for about two months now and all has been well (apart from a week of slow connection issues). That was until last week. At about the same time most nights (around 8pm), I get disconnected for about an hour. Then I can get on for an hour, then I am off for an hour, and so on.

My real problem is that I have made 13 phone calls totalling approximately six hours of my life listening to some idiot murdering a violin, waiting to speak to someone on a helpline who can sort the problem out for me. As you can tell from the amount of calls, they can't, as no one seems to know what is going on or how to resolve this issue.

There are apparently connection issues in the Redditch, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster areas but my problem started more than six days before these other issues were highlighted. I know what the problem is – my account with Telewest has trouble renewing itself every 24 hours – but it's getting Telewest to do something about it!

I have had two engineer visits, two modems and it seems that it's only me that can tell that every night I am going to get disconnected from an always-on service that I am paying for.

I feel the only way to resolve this issue is to covertly get myself a job with Telewest and sort out my account myself. As I sit typing this out now, I am waiting on a helpline. I have been holding for an hour and 25 minutes so far and I don't know what's going to happen if I get through – but I am sure the service I am paying for will not be resumed.

Let this serve as a warning to other online gamers thinking of 'upgrading' and using Telewest's 'always-on' service.

'Mr Mills'

"I have made 13 phone calls totalling approximately six hours of my life listening to some idiot murdering a violin, waiting to speak to someone on a helpline"

'MR MILLS' FINDS NOBODY'S IN AT TELEWEST

A Six and a half hours? Blimey, now that's what Watchdog calls perseverance. After putting up with so much and getting so little in return, we went to Telewest on your behalf to see if we could shoehorn a response out of them. They got back to us the next day with the following: "I was concerned to hear about the recent problems Mr Mills has been experiencing with his blueyonder broadband Internet service from Telewest," says Chad Raube, the head of Internet services at the company. "It appears his cable modem service was affected by some localised and intermittent network issues that did not show up on tests when our engineers first investigated the matter. We have now restored the ultra-fast and always-on service that we aim to deliver to all our broadband Internet customers and have compensated Mr Mills for any inconvenience caused."

They go on to say that Telewest is committed to delivering "the best broadband Internet experience possible and we are continuously improving every aspect of our network delivery and customer service. We have a dedicated sales support team, a free-phone broadband technical support centre, a one-stop-shop installation process and one of the shortest order-to-install waits in the industry."

Great. But if anyone else has problems, drop us a line and we'll pass them onto Telewest.

The world wide web.
It's big. It's exciting.
It's enthralling.
It's also been painfully slow to access and download. Until now.

Are Telewest really making things easier?

SLAMMER.COM UPDATE

As we reported last month, Slammer.com, the Internet mail order company, has hit the rocks leaving punters stung by the firm's PlayStation 2 deal. The promotion was simple – pay £300 up front and then you would receive your PS2 and £150 cashback. Unfortunately, many readers got their PS2s but no cashback and, in some cases, punters didn't even get the console full stop.

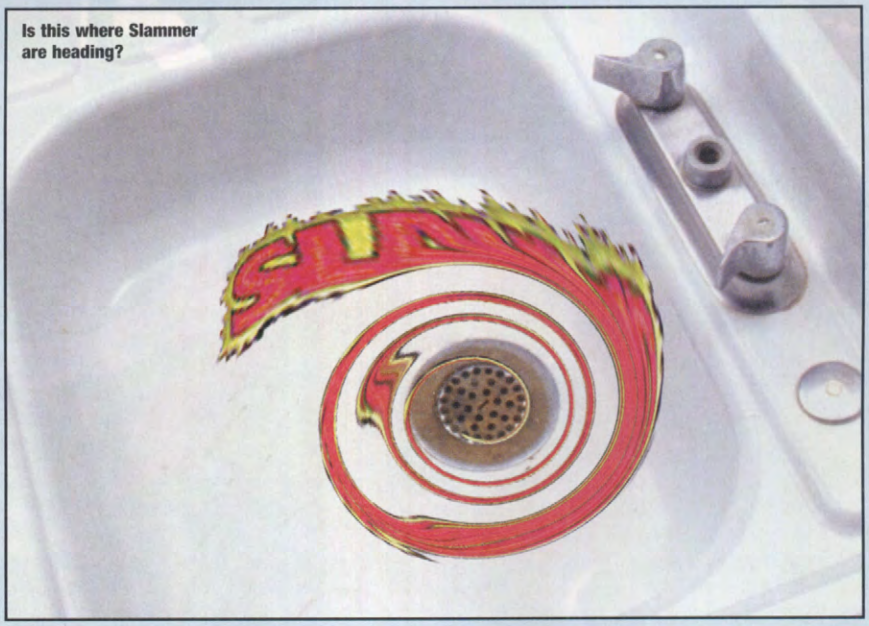
We contacted Southwark Trading Standards to see what the current state of play is with their investigations. "We are currently co-ordinating the various complaints and passing them onto the Office of Fair Trading and the Department for Trade and Industry for them to take action against the people responsible," said a spokesperson for STS.

So far, STS has passed on some 120 names to the OFT and the DTI. Watchdog though has heard rumours that another company is stepping in and buying Slammer. While some customers claim to have received an email from said company, STS have been unable to confirm or rebuff this rumour.

So what advice would they offer to those who have been burnt by the experience? "If you paid by credit card, then contact your card issuer for a refund. For those who paid by debit card such as Switch, then I'm afraid there isn't a lot you can do."

Bad news then we're afraid for any reader who went down the debit route. As we said last month, try and use a credit card whenever you are buying clobber online. If you don't have access to one for whatever reason, then research the company you are buying from as much as you can – see if they have a physical address displayed on their website. Dig round in the newsgroups to see if anyone has been complaining about them, or ideally see if you can give your cash to mate or a parent who has a credit card. They can then order the item for you using their card. It might sound like a lot of hassle but it's better to be safe than sorry.

Finally, if there are any other disgruntled Slammer customers out there reading this, then drop us a line to let us know how you are getting on...



Is this where Slammer are heading?

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.



© ILLUSTRATION Phil Clark



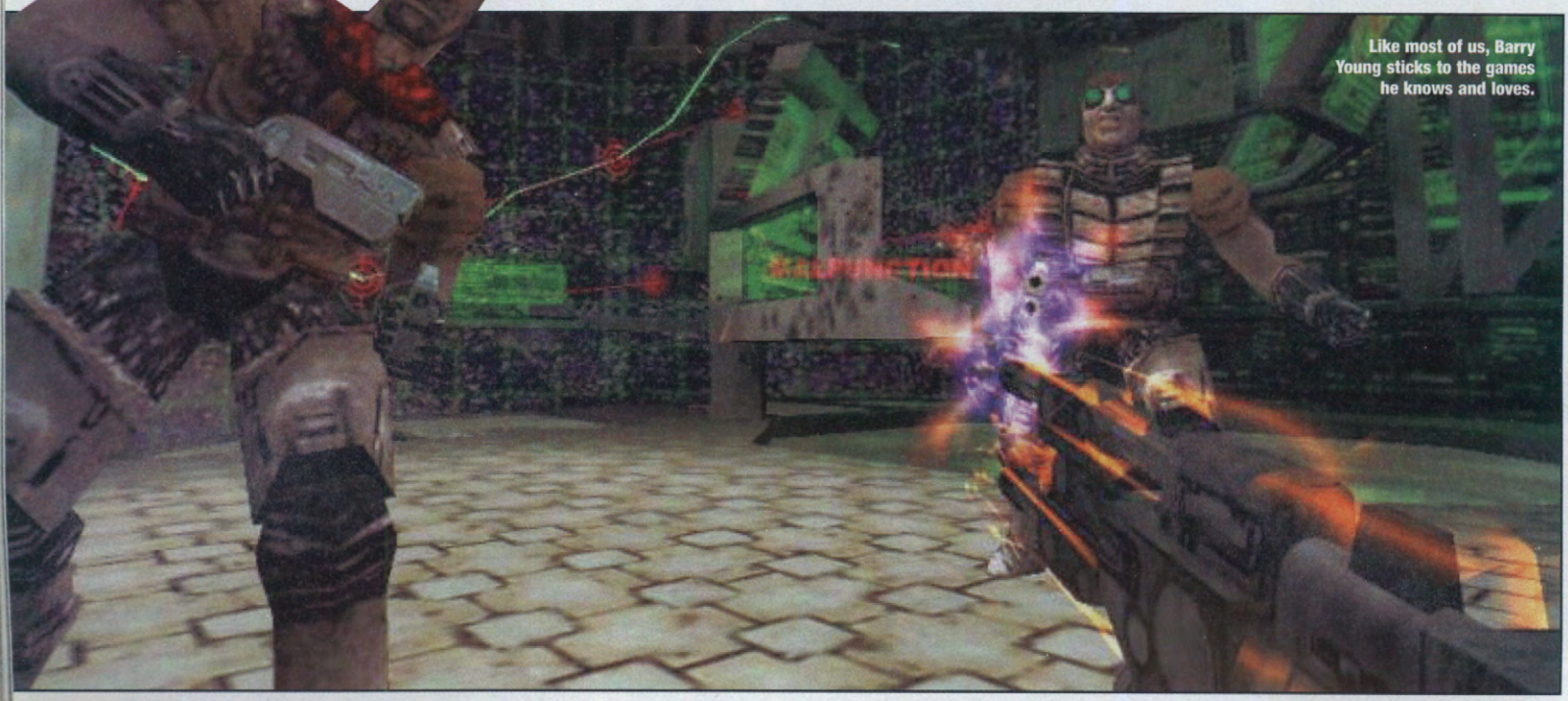
GAME & ABLE

Having a love of PC games and being disabled can be a frustrating combination. While there may not be any final solutions, *Paul Rigby* says that there's plenty of help and guidance out there for the disabled gamer

The PC gamer has never had it so good. Fast PCs, spanking good games, advanced graphics and sound, some amazing gameplay and always something interesting and new to look forward to. We take all of this for granted – and why not? If you've got the cash and the PC with the right specs, then get in there and have a great time. However, there are plenty of similarly dedicated gamers out there who find it harder to cope – not necessarily with time or money but the physical act of playing the thing in the first place. If you're a PC gamer and you're disabled then, depending on your disability, computer gaming can range from a task to a chore.

Take Barry William Young, who suffers from SMA (Spinal Muscular Atrophy), a condition that severely weakens the body. Barry is mobile via a wheelchair and is an avid gamer. "I stick with one type in particular: *Half-life*, *Gunman Chronicles* and the online game *Team Fortress Classic*."

"If you're a PC gamer and you're disabled then, depending on your disability, computer gaming can range from a task to a chore"



Like most of us, Barry Young sticks to the games he knows and loves.

With Barry's condition, control of a game can be a problem, but if a game requires a lot of keyboard commands Barry just programs his Sidewinder gamepad for the basic functions. "I can play any game providing I have the right peripheral. I use an optical three-button mouse with a wheel as well as a Sidewinder Pro to play *TFC*. I just need a bit of practice if I need a new peripheral to aid me."

THE PLAYING FIELDS

So playing PC games, and mass-market PC games at that, does not have to be a major problem. In some cases disabled gamers reach dizzy heights and far exceed the skills of many able-bodied gamers. Edward Watson, a director and co-founder of The Playing Fields (TPF), has made it his aim to bring computer gaming in line with mainstream entertainment. The Playing Fields get involved in most things to do with multiplayer computer gaming, and disabled gamers have taken part as active team members. For example, one chap, disabled in the lower half of his body, successfully played in the *PC ZONE*-sponsored 1999 UK PC Games Championships (www.ukpcgc.co.uk), attended by 800 players in five different venues, taking part in a team tournament over eight games. Our hero made it through to the finals at The Playing Fields in London. He was the strategy expert in the team and won convincingly on his games in the heats. Disability certainly doesn't blunt one's competitiveness.

One of the most intriguing stories stems from Yngsjö in Sweden where people who have suffered motor impairments or are suffering from traumatic brain injury play a wide variety of games, including people who have suffered terrible motorcycle injuries who play Microsoft's *Motocross Madness 1* and *2* as well as *Supreme Snowboarding*. It seems that a need for speed overrides any possible danger to life and limb as PeO Hedvall, owner of Sweden's AnyCom, a PC hardware manufacturer who also works in an educational establishment for the disabled testifies. "We have used games in several ways for quite some years now. Our speech therapists and teachers have used games in their work for about ten years. The first thing they have to address when they meet a new person is often to find out a way for that person to control/steer his or her computer. For people with severe motor impairments the solution is often to use one, two or five switches that are connected to the computer via a switch interface. The switch can be everything from a large button on the table to a wink of the eye.



AnyCom's JoyBox will open up gaming to a new audience.

Using games during the initial tests has proved to be a useful way to create a good training situation and at the same time get to know each other."

The first essential need that PeO recognised was a switch interface (basically, a box full of sockets) that can control games. Accordingly, his company developed a product called JoyBox. The sockets can be used for any external, commonly-used, disabled switch. Since it's a USB device the JoyBox installs automatically and doesn't need to be



Motocross: it's more than a game for some people.

calibrated. The USB JoyBox will be released in October. The essence of JoyBox is that, with this interface device, disabled gamers can play mass-market games whereas previously they couldn't. It is that important. Next on PeO's list is an Xbox version. (If you fancy one talk to Paul Hawes at Sensory Software – email him at paul@sensorysoftware.com.)

BUILDING CAMARADERIE

Many gamers with disabilities believe that the camaraderie and human contact which computer games provide is just as important as the competition, particularly with the new online games that allow players to compete and talk to their team-mates and opponents on the Internet. Because disabilities can often make it hard to get out of the house, many people have a "huge void" of human contact, says John LeDell, director of Golfcom.com, a website where *Links* players compete in tournaments. "They may only see other people a couple of times a week," says LeDell, who contracted polio when he was two years old and now uses crutches. "Someone without a disability probably sees that many people every minute of the day when they are working."

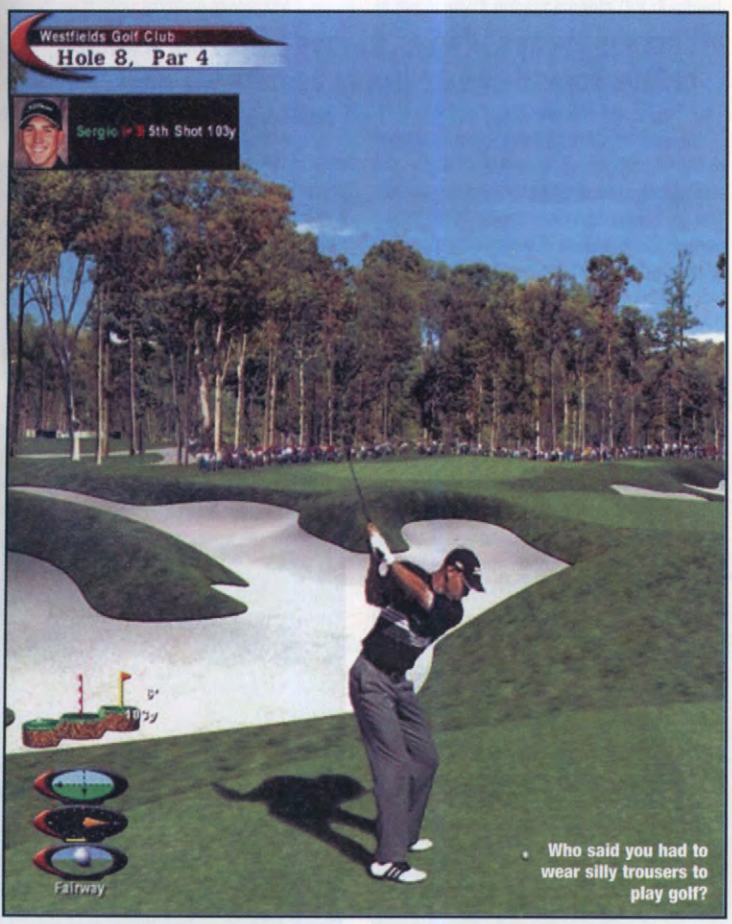
LeDell has amassed a list of 500 fellow "Linksters" from all over the world with whom he plays and has formed friendships. When the pain from his leg keeps him up at night, he flicks on the computer. "There is always, always, always one of my friends online," says LeDell. Sometimes we'll play. Sometimes we'll chat."

Although his disability limits his playing time to a few hours each morning, Paul Willey, an avid *Links* player with multiple sclerosis, is considered the best *Links* player in the world. He has won more than 200 online golf tournaments and leads the inaugural VGA Tour, winning the first three events by seven, six and three strokes, respectively. The winner of the tour, which concludes with a special event in Hawaii in November, will receive US$100,000.

Microsoft is working with makers of gaming controls to allow even those with almost no mobility to play. The Tracker 2000, a device made by Madentec of Edmonton, Canada, allows people with quadriplegia to play *Links LS* by manipulating an infrared beam of light. The beam shines from a camera attached to their computer, bounces off a tiny reflective dot which is worn on the forehead, and goes back to the computer screen. Every shift of the head moves the cursor. Then you blow in a straw or suck in cheek muscles to click the mouse button.

"I am not blind, merely colour blind. It was my inability to discern coloured dots on a map that got me thinking about making games that were more accessible"

STEVE NUTT, COMPUTER ROOM SERVICES



Who said you had to wear silly trousers to play golf?

DEAFGAMERS.COM

Game developers, listen up!

There are plenty of quality, supportive websites for disabled people on the Internet but not too many that are aimed specifically at gamers. Lora Willetts' own Deafgamers site (www.deafgamers.com) is a rarity in that it reviews PC games specifically for people with hearing difficulties. Willetts' growing experience is valuable and revealing. Deaf people want to see proper subtitling in games, which is no surprise, but would also like to see more information on the actual packaging, akin to the video and DVD packages we see today. The deaf community also wants text speed control options, ("we're not all speed readers") and colour-coding for character speech. They would also like to see more visual clues in the games, too. "The dreaded *Half-Life* could have solved all their problems with a patch to include subtitles and another to add a little pair of moving footprints to indicate that there is someone approaching from behind. Deaf gamers dislike *Half-Life*." The 'best game that ever graced the PC'? Hmm... reduced to rubble because it was complete tripe for deaf gamers.

The site has attempted to communicate with the industry. Petitions have been sent to the games companies with a plea for them to listen to what deaf people want to see in their games. As Willetts explains: "I had a few emails [from deaf gamers] once I had uploaded the review for *Blue Shift*. No subtitles again. It's hard to understand why Sierra would take no notice of deaf gamer's pleas for subtitles. I have asked Sierra why but as yet I have had no response."

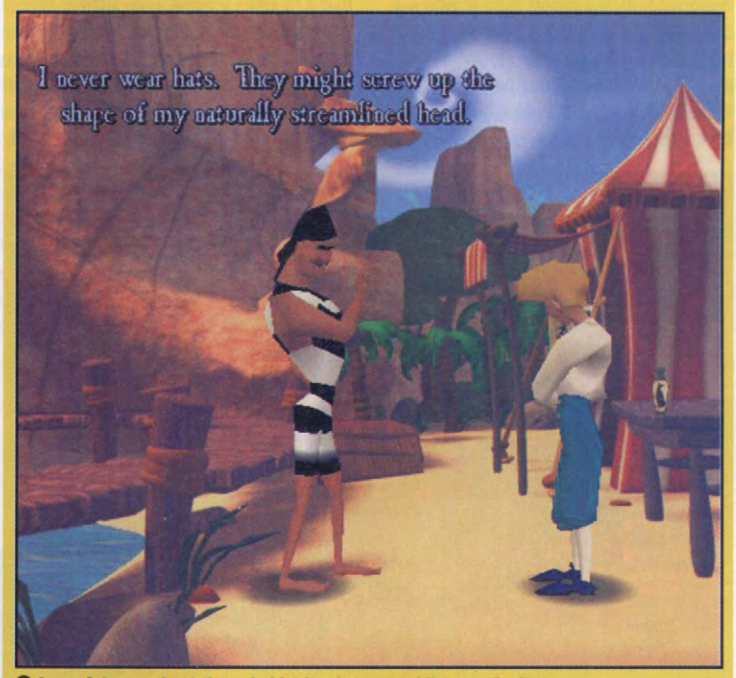
Contrast this indifferent design approach with that of LucasArts, however. "LucasArts positions its subtitles in a logical way. The text always appears next to the character who is speaking and, therefore, you can keep looking at the action and still follow the dialogue, instructions and everything else. It's much better."



Not Deafgamers' Game of the Year.

In an appeal to the industry, Willetts says: "If we had the chance to liaise with the developers, we could offer advice on what deaf people want from subtitling so that games could either be patched or corrected, if at an early enough stage. Perhaps we could even host a patch page for developers?"

Anyone out there?



LucasArts are about the only big developer providing captioning.

STAYING IN THE GAME

Games don't always turn kids into psychotic killers

Often games are the easiest way to teach computer skills to children with disabilities. They can learn how to type or use assistive technology while they are playing. Infogrames' own Lee Kirton is one who knows.

"Both my children have inherited a genetic condition called Retinoblastoma (RB), [a tumour that develops on the retina at the back of the eye]. Katy was diagnosed too late to save her right eye and it was removed when she was one. It is called bilateral RB when it is in both eyes, as in Katy's case. She got a cataract as a side effect of radiotherapy and had an operation to remove it and insert a lens implant last August. Katy is now six years old, and wears bifocal glasses for close work and protection."

Of course, Katy loves to play around with the PC – *Wacky Races* is her favourite game at the moment. Before her frequent game-playing, Katy's co-ordination was not so good. However, Lee has noticed that continued play has improved matters immeasurably providing an intensive and successful 'treatment' all of its own. Result?

"Her co-ordination is far better than mine now," Lee says. "She had a friend round in the last school holidays who has the same condition and they played on the computer for most of the afternoon."

Lee's son, Harry, has unilateral RB, and loves to sit with Katy and watch her play games.

"He has limited vision in his left eye," explains Kirton, "because of a laser scar that is affecting his central vision. He's learning how to use the machine – when he can get Katy off it, that is."

Often sound can provide the greatest level of interaction within a computer game, whether the user is disabled or not. We've found for example that *Star Trek: Starfleet Command II* is in many ways a much more rewarding experience when played with the Microsoft Game Voice. In it you of course play the captain of a Star Fleet or Klingon ship, whose main interface with his crew in the TV shows is primarily through voice alone. Rather than press a key to raise shields, with a Microsoft Game Voice or similar headset and software, you can tell your virtual colleagues to do what they are paid to do instead. *Star Trek: Bridge Commander*, the forthcoming space sim from Totally Games (of *X-Wing* series fame), was initially designed from the outset to be played through voice-activated means. The good news is that you don't have to speak perfect Queen's English either; software these days is so good even a dog could bark orders.

SOUND GAMES

Computer games are gradually becoming accessible to all gamers, regardless of ability. A handful of developers are creating Windows-compatible games for the blind that use elaborate soundscapes to help players navigate mazes or blast bad guys.

One such company is Bavisoft, run by Jeff Gibbons, (www.bavisoft.com, contact Computer Room Services in the UK. Email Steve Nutt at steve@comproom.co.uk) who says: "I myself am not blind, merely colour blind. In fact, it was my inability to discern coloured dots on a map for Electronic Arts' *Magic Carpet* that initially got me thinking about making games that were more accessible."

Bavisoft's *Grizzly Gulch* is important in that it requires absolutely no sight to play. In fact, aside from a title screen there are no graphics in the games. The blind user gets the complete experience. From the moment the program is launched it is entirely presented in audio form. "We used professional musicians, sound engineers and voice talent to bring the game world to life," explains Gibbons.



***Bridge Commander* was specially designed to be played with voice-activated means.**

The game is controlled by the use of the four arrow keys on the keyboard, which is a very accessible interface. In *Grizzly Gulch: Western Extravaganza*, the player can wander about a town in the Old West. Among other things, they can interact with the locals, gamble in the saloon or uphold the law in blazing live action gun battles. The action sequences are done using stereo sound cues for positioning. Complete audio-based help is also available at any time.

Gibbons' next product, due in October, is described as a "…huge step forward in blind computer gaming. The player will be treated to a much larger adventure than in *Grizzly Gulch* and there will be a lot more interaction with people and objects within the game environment as well as new exciting action sequences. More games will be released at regular intervals following that, including a sports package in the spring of 2002."

Possibly even more advanced is the *Quake* clone from US-based Greenwood Management Associates Incorporated (www.gma.com) called *Shades Of Doom*. It uses multi-dimensional, multi-layered sound to create a virtual reality. *Shades Of Doom* uses footstep echoes, wind sounds, noisy game objects and several other tools to help the player with orientation and navigation while moving through the world. The game could be described as a first-person shoot 'em up. The game is self-voicing, so no screen reader is necessary to play the game. "To give you an idea of what the game is like," continued David Greenwood Treasurer for GMA, "imagine you are walking down a hallway. You hear an emergency alert to your left and just ahead. As you walk on, the emergency alert slowly moves further to your right and then to the back of you. You are alerted to the existence of a door to your left and you slowly turn in that direction. As you walk up to it, it automatically opens and there is the sound of a mutant dog coming slowly towards you, just to the right. You slowly turn to the right and your nightscope alerts you to the fact that the monster is in your sights. You fire your manual bolt gun and the mutant dog screams in anger. It moves to the left to dodge your shots but you centre it in your sights again and fire again. By the sounds of a thump and the groan of the monster, you know it's dead. You then continue exploring the research base, searching for a way to shut down the experiment and to find your way out."



Microsoft's Game Voice: technology like this is available to PC gamers and more gamers should make use of it.

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS

Despite the welcome developments produced by Microsoft mentioned above, the excellent work done by the likes of Bavisoft and GMA is not reflected in the general industry, a disappointing situation that alienates many disabled gamers. Talking, on behalf of the software industry in the UK, Michael Rawlinson, general manager for ELSPA (The European Leisure Software Publishers Association) defended the present lack of direct disabled support from software publishers by reminding us of the basic raison d'être of PC computer gaming itself. "Clearly the blind are regrettably unable to access this form of visual entertainment. Those who are partially sighted can use larger screens or stronger corrective lenses. However, a publisher may not want to alter the overall colour or lighting scheme of a game, as this may be detrimental to the effect they are trying to achieve. Where these factors are less critical, though, it may be possible."

"There is always, always, always one of my friends online. Sometimes we'll play, sometimes we'll chat"

JOHN LEDELL, DIRECTOR OF GOLFCOM.COM

As for deaf gamers? "Deaf people or those with poor hearing may be able to



Jeff Gibbons creates games for the blind.



It took us ten seconds to caption this shot, so it can't be too difficult to caption a game.

enjoy games without any changes to the program depending on the type of genre. However, some genres rely on a narrative and, in these cases, subtitling would enable deaf gamers to access the gaming experience. Some games already do this."

This is a misconception that even the industry appears to believe. Subtitling is *not* used by game developers. Yes, there is a pseudo-subtitling addition (generally textualising the spoken word) in some titles, but this is not a 'feature' included for the benefit of disabled gamers (although deaf gamers take some advantage of it). What you sometimes see as subtitling is a 'lazy' feature to get around time-consuming and expensive localisation procedures. That is, the act of adapting an English game, for example, to an American market or a European country whose population speaks – or rather reads – English. The complexity of computer game subtitling is nowhere near the standards reached by BBC TV, for example, who will highlight sound effects through on-screen text. There is good news on the horizon, for deaf gamers, however, specifically via Electronic Arts, who are currently investigating the needs of disabled players. For example, the development studios are considering subtitles for future games where there is dialogue.

Regarding the lack of disabled support to date, ELSPA's Michael Rawlinson repeats the oft-quoted maxim when he explains that "…profits from a few games support the losses of many. Publishers will always need to see a potentially positive commercial outcome if they are to invest in the product enhancements (for disabled gamers) or obtain external funding, maybe from government, to support the additional investment."

It is a fact that there are, let us say, 'disappointed' gamers out there who do not fully appreciate or accept the economic reasons that the likes of ELSPA proffer to explain the overall lack of support provided by the software industry to software gamers. GMA's David Greenwood defends the software industry but with an interesting caveat. "I don't think that game developers are ignoring the groups with disabilities but, rather, I don't think we are even on their radar screens. Many games could be made accessible with very little effort if it was any type of priority to these developers. I am sure cost comes into it as well. For example, I heard that the Nintendo 64's *Perfect Dark* cost $8 million to produce. If it only took five per cent more money to produce and market an accessible game for the blind, the costs would be US$160,000. I am quite sure that this could be recovered and profit made, in addition."

If the industry took a look out of the window now and again, they would realise that the world is a much bigger and more varied place than they obviously, currently perceive. They would also understand that society is a vast, mixed bag of people – a large slice of which are disabled. Have the industry undertaken *any* research into the potential this market offers them? I think not – and I would love to be proven wrong on this point. Do they have *any* conception, for the want of a few added in-game features, how much support they would receive if they tried? None that I can see. The disabled 'fraternity' is one of the most integrated, organised and altogether 'switched-on' sections of society today. I am sure the software publishers would be surprised at the response, interest and even loyalty they would receive. If only these same software publishers would take disabled gamers seriously and treat them with the respect that all members of society expect and deserve. PZ

CONTACT

If you are disabled and have a PC which you find difficult to operate, give AbilityNet a call or check out the webpage below

AbilityNet is an organisation that aims to help people who have difficulties with the standard computer, mouse or screen. They can provide information on plenty of enhancements and alternatives to these devices. For further information log on to www.abilitynet.co.uk or telephone 01926 312847. Ask for Tom and *say PC ZONE* sent you.

In addition, the following companies provide hardware accessories for disabled PC users:

Keytools Ltd
Tel: 02380 584314
fax 02380 584320
Email: tim@keytools.com
Website: www.keytools.com

Inclusive Technology
Tel: 01457 819790
Email: inclusive@inclusive.co.uk
Website: www.inclusive.co.uk

Don Johnston Special Needs Ltd
Tel: 01925 256500
Email: info@djsn.u-net.com
Website: www.donjohnston.com

REM Ltd
Tel: 01458 253 636
Email: sales@r-e-m.co.uk
Website: www.r-e-m.co.uk

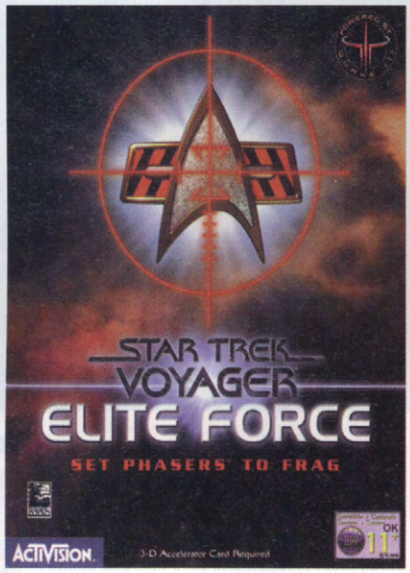


GMA's David Greenwood.

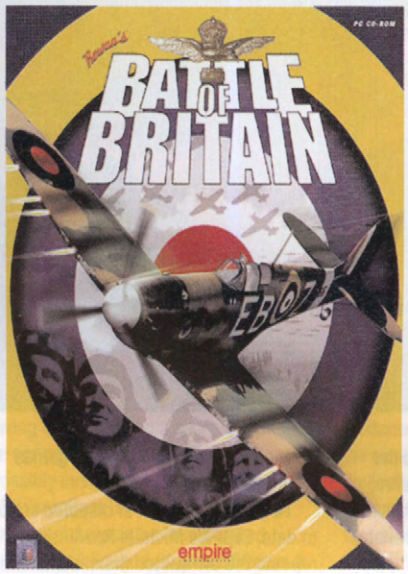


Michael Rawlinson, general manager of software trade body ELSPA.

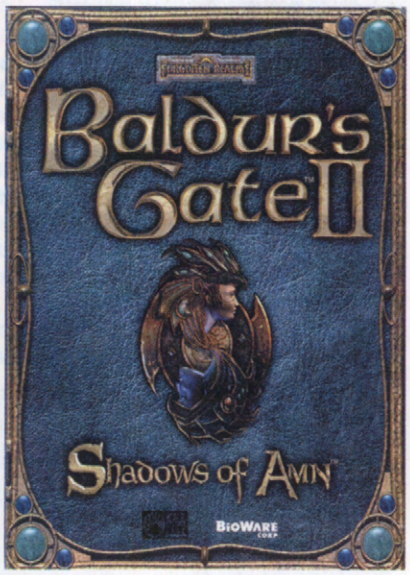
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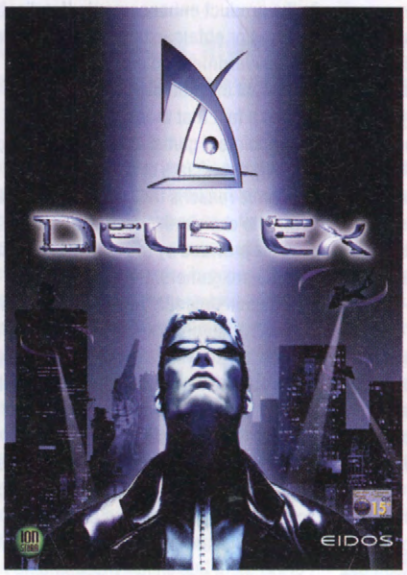
STAR TREK VOYAGER:
ELITE FORCE



BATTLE OF BRITAIN



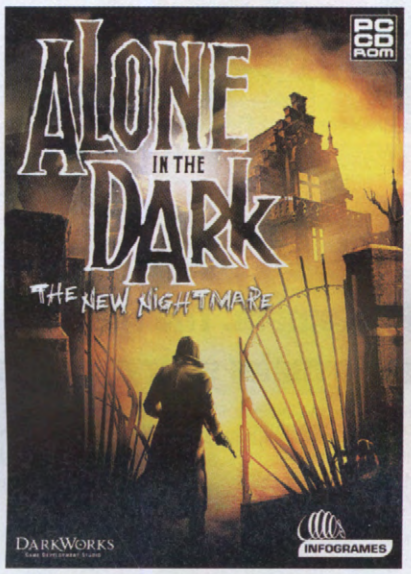
BALDUR'S GATE II:
SHADOWS OF AMN



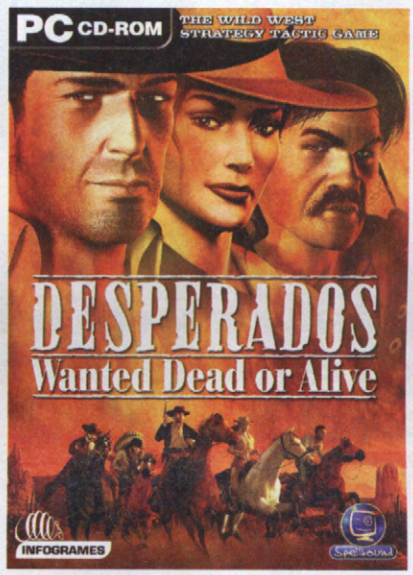
DEUS EX

*lowest price product free, prices may vary in Eire, stickered product only whilst stocks last

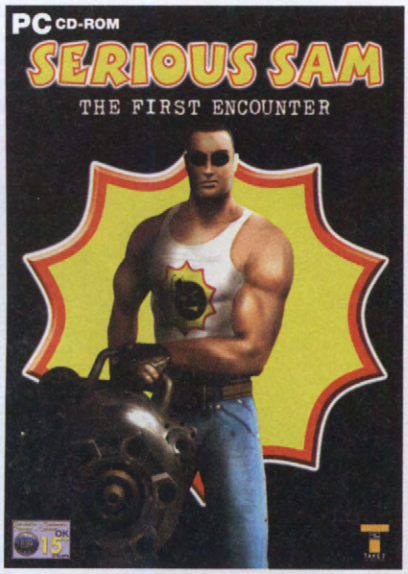
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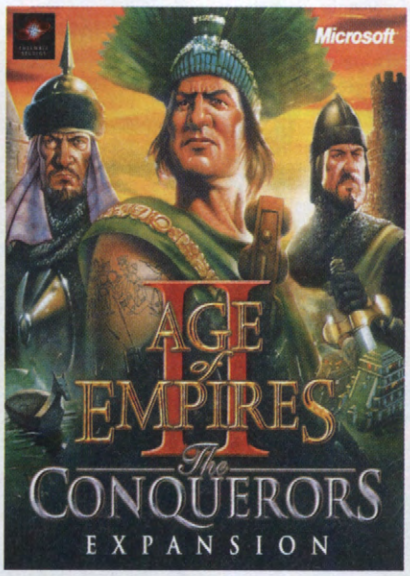
ALONE IN THE DARK IV



DESPERADOS



SERIOUS SAM



AGE OF EMPIRES II:
THE CONQUERORS EXPANSION

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON
Virgin megastores



PCZONE TOP100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all PC Gamers. The following games are the best 100 games money can buy, split into genres to make your purchases even easier

Have you got money burning a hole in your pocket? If so, make a cheque or postal order payable to *PC ZONE* and we'll forget about writing the mag and get ourselves down the pub for a good drink-up. If you're not feeling altruistic then perhaps you might want to buy yourself a game, but which one? How can you sort the *Unreal Tournament* from the *Daikatana*? Relax, this is where the *PC ZONE* Top 100 comes in handy.

Every game listed here is worth buying. If you're a fan of a certain genre you can head straight for your favourite games, which are ranked in order of brilliance. Some of the games might be a bit long in the tooth but that shouldn't put you off. Most of the old-timers have been re-released on budget and you'll be able to find the rest pretty cheap if you shop around.

The rules are pretty simple. Each month we review a load of games. If any of them are good enough to enter the Top 100 they take their rightful place and the bottom one in that particular genre is consigned to the dustbin never to return again. As games are always improving, we re-evaluate all the titles in a genre every time there is a new entry.

Each month we'll also show you the games that we think are the Top 10 of all time. This month deputy editor Richie Shoemaker gets the chance to talk about all the games that he plays when he should be writing stuff for the mag.



WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

If a game gets a Classic rating (90 per cent or above) in *PC ZONE* you know it's going to be pretty spectacular. Unlike other organs, we don't shower Classics around like confetti at a royal wedding and you won't find one in every single issue. In fact, of all the games released this year, only four have been deemed worthy of our gold award, and that includes *Max Payne*, who won't even enter the Top 100 until next month.

Classics have to have something a bit different. They have to take the genre to new heights or impress with originality. For this reason you should also pay special attention to the games that receive our Award Of Excellence (80-89 per cent). When we say excellent, we mean excellent, and if you're a fan of the genre these games fall into you won't be disappointed. Put your faith in us and we won't let you down, and that's a promise.



FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #71 • 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the *Generations* pack.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



MAX PAYNE

PCZ #107 • 90%

NEW ENTRY It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet-Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PCZ #81 • 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188



QUAKE III ARENA

PCZ #87 • 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

PCZ #101 • 85%

This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



GUNMAN CHRONICLES

PCZ #97 • 84%

While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must-have for any fan of the genre.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



PROJECT IGI

PCZ #97 • 84%

Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage-oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

PCZ #94 • 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team-mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143 525



SERIOUS SAM

PCZ #102 • 81%

Serious Sam is a game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old-fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



CODENAME OUTBREAK

PCZ #107 • 80%

NEW ENTRY Rid the world of an invading parasitic alien race in missions that are full of suspense and action – relying on stealth over brute force. However, early missions are dull, and the graphics are somewhat lacking to say the least.

PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 020 7551 4266

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #89 • 90%

Take command of enormous armies and engage in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options don't get in the way of the instant playability of this game. *Shogun* will simply blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

PCZ #101 • 90%

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344

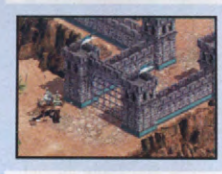


COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

PCZ #101 • 89%

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144



AOEII: COLLECTORS' EDITION

PCZ #84 • 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single- and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000



GROUND CONTROL

PCZ #92 • 86%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



SUDDEN STRIKE

PCZ #96 • 85%

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144



HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM

PCZ #96 • 85%

Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



MECHCOMMANDER 2

PCZ #107 • 84%

NEW ENTRY If you prefer tactics over force, look no further than Microsoft's highly polished robot-based RTS. Its well-scripted storyline and superb atmosphere will keep you gripped from the first explosive mission to the last.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000



EARTH 2150

PCZ #90 • 84%

A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTS games around. *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title than the likes of *Shogun*, and it has the rare quality of actually advancing the genre.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000



C&C: RED ALERT 2

PCZ #95 • 82%

After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable storyline with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #93 • 94%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 91%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 89%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ#96 • 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



ARCANUM

PCZ #106 • 84%

Whether you play through as a mage or a techy, you'll still find *Arcanum* hugely entertaining. Don't let its looks fool you – it has a great plot and flexible character development. A massive and addictive game.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



ANANCHRONOX

PCZ #105 • 83%

The release of *Anachronox* proves *Deus Ex* wasn't a fluke for Ion Storm. OK, it's not as good, but it's an interesting and genuinely funny game in its own right, and we don't get to say that about many games. Well worth a punt.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%

Despite the release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more sub-games and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



FALLOUT 2

PCZ #71 • 79%

Twice as big as the original, but utilising the same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – and if you don't already own the original, you can now pick up both of these life-sapping RPGs for less than a tenner.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 0207 551 4266



ICEWIND DALE

PCZ #93 • 75%

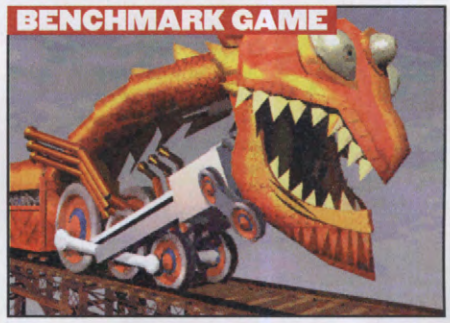
Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising as it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *Baldur's Gate II*.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 0207 5514266

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #71 • 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255



DISCWORLD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #98 • 87%

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

PCZ #98 • 85%

Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



PROJECT EDEN

PCZ #107 • 85%

NEW ENTRY You control four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis that is as predictable as it is innovative. The combat and AI may be somewhat dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR

PCZ #96 • 84%

As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

PCZ #98 • 82%

One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you and, undoubtedly, *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in the last couple of years.

PUBLISHER Activision •08705 143525



METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #98 • 86%

✪ With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how *2.0* would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 — PCZ #96 • 84%

✪ Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races and improved controls, *MM2* is now the daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000



F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000 — PCZ #97 • 82%

✪ While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin-pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 • 81 %

✪ Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skilful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



GRAND PRIX 3 — PCZ #94 • 80%

✪ This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no teamwork. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Infogrames•0161 8278060



INSANE — PCZ #97 • 78%

✪ Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 — PCZ #90 • 78%

✪ Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



RALLY MASTERS — PCZ #89 • 77%

✪ Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 76%

✪ Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 75%

✪ Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

GOD GAMES

BLACK & WHITE

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #100 • 95%

✪ One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



CALL TO POWER II — PCZ #98 • 85%

✪ *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525



THE SIMS — PCZ #87 • 85%

✪ This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 84%

✪ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 83%

✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01932 450134



ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS — PCZ #97 • 83%

✪ From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 • 82%

✪ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060



DUNGEON KEEPER 2 — PCZ #79 • 75%

✪ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DKII* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING — PCZ #70 • 74%

✪ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Even 'Peterless', the Bullfrog team proved they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134



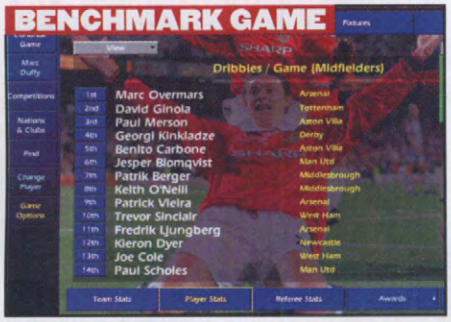
THEME HOSPITAL — PCZ #71 • 73%

✪ We were sceptical at first. How can a sim game involving building hospitals be fun? But it is fun, damn fun. Building bigger and better hospitals and finding a cure for all our ills, including hairyitus, bloaty head and – the bane of all human existence – Elvis impersonators.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

SPORTS

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01



PCZ #96 • 93%

✪ This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2



PCZ #98 • 88%

✪ *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break all his bones as he smashes his face against the concrete.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

VIRTUAL POOL 3



PCZ #99 • 85%

✪ *VP3* has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FIFA 2001



PCZ #97 • 83%

✪ Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING



PCZ #85 • 83%

✪ Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000



PCZ #92 • 82%

✪ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000



PCZ #85 • 82%

✪ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01932 450134

OPEN TENNIS 2000



PCZ #92 • 80%

✪ Not since Super Tennis on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. For a near identical game with slightly better AI and more bugs, it's worth checking out *Roland Garros French Open 2001*.

PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2



PCZ #68 • 78%

✪ The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.

PUBLISHER Virgin/Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ACTUA SOCCER 3



PCZ #72 • 72%

✪ If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS



PCZ #104 • 90%

✪ The most anticipated military game of the year was worth all the hype and more. This squad-based shooter can be played in both third- and first-person and is the ultimate military simulation package, with a stunning atmosphere and superb mission structures. Lock yourself away because this game deserves your full attention.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS



PCZ #79 • 88%

✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

HOSTILE WATERS

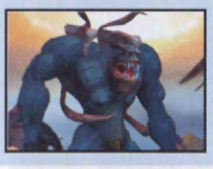


PCZ #101 • 87%

✪ A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely strategically or leap into a unit and get up close and personal to the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though. Why make love when you can make war?

PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO



PCZ #95 • 85%

✪ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option and almost naked women, which usually makes for a good time.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION



PCZ #97 • 84%

✪ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.

PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

SPEC OPS 2



PCZ #84 • 82%

✪ When *Spec Ops 2* came out it challenged *Hidden & Dangerous* for the top spot. The game puts you in charge of a four-man green beret squad intent on staying alive and shooting the enemy in the head. Incredibly realistic, with top-notch sound.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

WARGASM



PCZ #71 • 81%

✪ Famed for its flight sims, DID finally delivers an action game only it could produce. With helicopters, APCs and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000

RAINBOW SIX GOLD PACK EDITION



PCZ #81 • 81%

✪ A landmark game in third-person action strategy games that was only surpassed by *Hidden & Dangerous*. Take control of your elite anti-terrorist squad, plan your missions ahead and indulge in some old fashioned killing. Also contains the *Eagle Watch* add-on pack

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 854 444

BATTLEZONE 2



PCZ #84 • 79%

✪ Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. A smooth gaming engine and a good variety of missions means the fight for world domination never looked so good.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR



PCZ #99 • 69%

✪ It might not be a *Counter-Strike* or a *Project IGI*, however the *Delta Force* series does have a loyal following who will probably buy it anyway. Superb multiplayer action and challenging on the highest difficulty level, but unfortunately dodgy AI.

PUBLISHER Novalogic • 020 7405 1777

FLIGHT SIMS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #99 • 89%

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually 'feel right'. Even though the graphics and general gameplay may not be ground-breaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337



FALCON 4 — PCZ #72 • 88%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH — PCZ #96 • 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060



COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 — PCZ #97 • 87%

If WWII dogfighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics create a true sense of excitement and realism.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000



EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON — PCZ #103 • 85%

Finally a flight sim that values the 'flight' aspect over the 'sim' so you can just enjoy the gameplay. *Tycoon* marks the future of the genre where the campaign engine takes care of itself while you play at being Tom Cruise.

PUBLISHER Rage Software • 0151 237 2200

SPACE COMBAT

X – GOLD

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #82 • 87%

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS — PCZ #93 • 86%

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*. Available from **www.macgames.co.uk**.

PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, an epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266



EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2 PCZ #104 • 83%

It's likely to appeal more to die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still takes steps to advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing free-form gaming are inspirational.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8000



BUDGET

X-WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 81%

At last. Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.

PUBLISHER Activision • 08705 143525

ALL-TIME CLASSICS

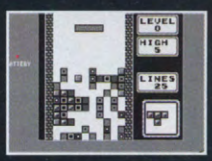


In no particular order whatsoever *PC ZONE* freelancerJames Lyon shares his all-time top ten games with us



HALF-LIFE (PC)

It's linear, it has shoddy ageing graphics that didn't even look good when it came out, the end section is awful and the puzzles are too easy. Just some of the things easily ignored when playing a game of such superlative stealing quality it hurts. Introduced set-pieces and in-game cut-scenes as de rigeur in all further good FPSs.



TETRIS (GB)

So simple to pick up, *Tetris* still sits atop the puzzle game hierarchy pouring scorn on weaker block-shifting, pattern-matching, reaction-timing puzzlers. Bombtris, ? I mean, what? In fact, one time I played it so much I began to hallucinate massive, solid *Tetris* blocks before my very eyes, until I realised I was looking at a wall. Ah well.



ULTIMA 7 (PC)

A refinement of all the good bits from the first six games, finely honed into one of the most sublime Western fantasy RPGs of all time. A load-free map and a stupidly simple interface married to a plot of magic, monarchy and an evil red man with a big chin. Just a shame numbers 8 and 9 had to go and spoil it. *Baldur's Gate 2*? What's that?



BLAST CORPS (N64)

An early Rare N64 title mostly swept aside by the public, but still up to their usual high standard. Knocking down buildings with demolition vehicles is all very well but it's the collectable structure and increasingly hard timed challenges that breathe life into its beautiful carcass.



SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (Amiga / PC)

A game I thought looked so great, I actually ordered it for my Amiga a year before it was released, and then had to wait another six months before I could fit the requisite 1Mb of RAM. It proved itself even more than expected, though, and the sequel is on the same par.



GOLDENEYE (N64)

Nobody had high expectations towards a console FPS, but soon shut up when this plopped on the mat. Features a supremely excellent difficulty-based objective system and cheat mode access that most other FPSs bizarrely refuse to copy. *Perfect Dark*'s multiplayer's better, though.



SUPER MARIO 64 (N64)

An obvious one I know, but after playing this again it seems strange that no other game has topped its simplicity and design in more than five years. Rare came very close, but their idea of better seems to be that four times the amount of collectables equals four times the amount of fun. Not necessarily.



PLANETFALL (Amiga / PC)

Text adventures, eh? Infocom games were always great and it was hard choosing one over the others. *Planetfall* excels, though, because of a particular scene with your robot buddy, Floyd, that's bound to bring tears to your eyes (or vomit to your throat depending on your disposition). Put card in slot. Sigh.



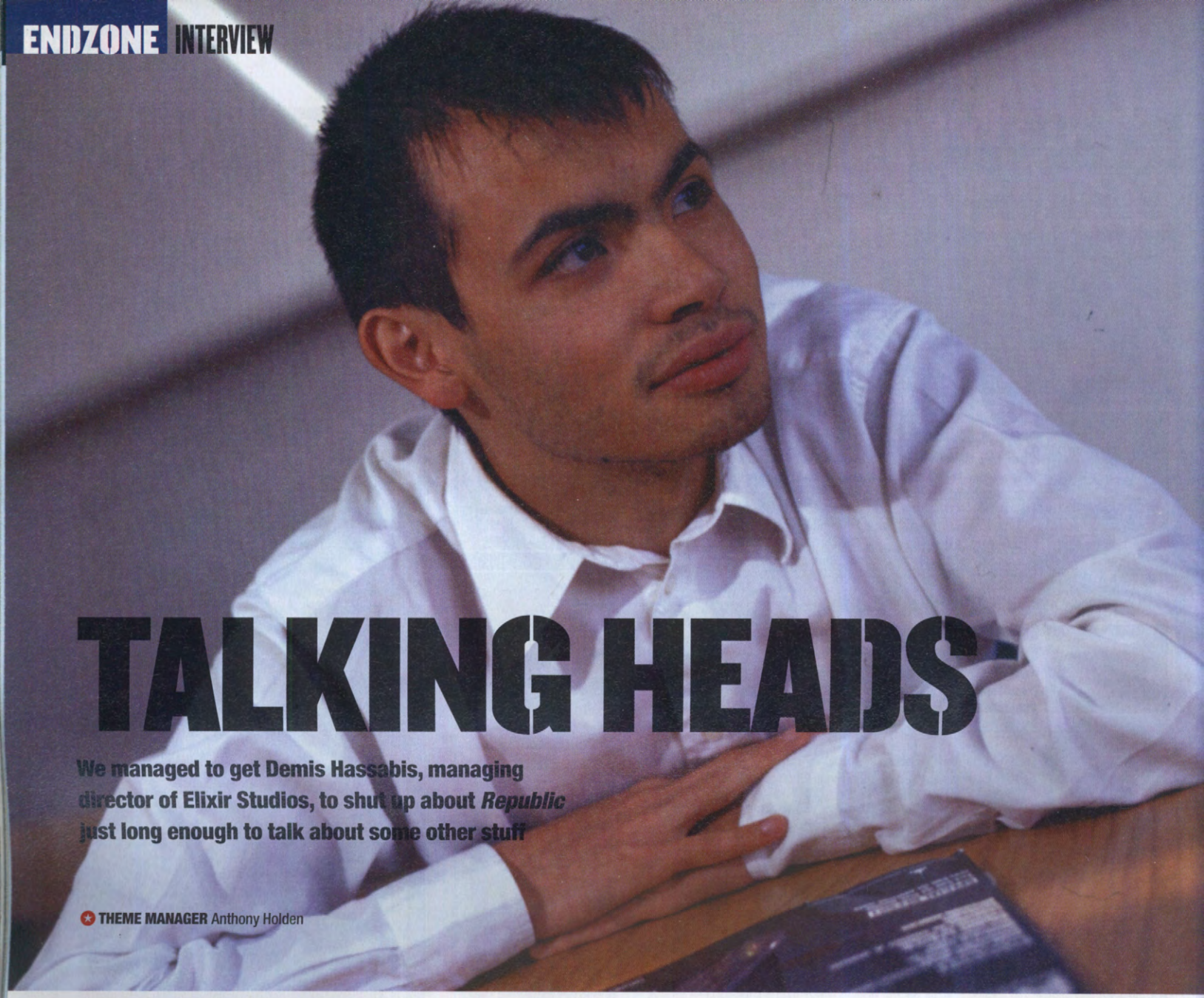
FINAL FANTASY VII (PS/PC)

It may value style and story over game, but what a story it is. Squaresoft made its name on the PS with this one. An epic globe-spanning journey that comes across with more efficacy than the film ever manages. Excellently structured to reveal new plot points, locations and dialogue after each success.



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (PC)

If ever a game was said to be ahead of its time, then *UU* would be it. The first RPG to successfully manage freeform 3D at a time when looking up was thought of as innovative. *UU2* may be bigger and better looking, but for internal consistency the first one definitely has it in the bag.



TALKING HEADS

We managed to get Demis Hassabis, managing director of Elixir Studios, to shut up about *Republic* just long enough to talk about some other stuff

THEME MANAGER Anthony Holden

Nobody likes a smart-arse, especially your junior chess champion, early school-leaving, Doogie Howser types who create one of the top-selling PC games of all time while the rest of the class are still smoking behind the bike sheds. Lucky Demis Hassabis is such a nice chap then, as otherwise we'd have felt compelled to give him a good posting and pull his tie so tight his mother would've had to cut it off with a pair of scissors. Instead we had a fascinating chat with him about *Theme Park*, the game he co-created with Peter Molyneux in 1994, *Black & White*, on which he served as senior programmer, and what he plans to do in the future.

The massive success of *Theme Park* kick-started the whole management genre. How do you feel about the nature and popularity of that genre now?

Right now the simulation genre is probably the most commercially successful genre around. I don't think we really knew what we were doing when we made *Theme Park*. We knew it was going to be a good game, but we didn't know it was going to kick this whole thing off. That was seven or eight years ago now, and ever since I've been thinking: 'What was it that made *Theme Park* so popular, and how could it be made better?' I think the nature of it is that people are basically all voyeurs. If you want to boil down what these games are about, they're about tinkering with little worlds and then watching people. That's really the whole thing.

And that's not enough anymore?

Well, the hardcore gamer side to me finds there's something not quite satisfying about this. Simulation games are a lot of fun, but the hardcore gamer in me sort of wanted a climactic end to a game. You can't win these games. You had objectives in *Theme Park Inc* and *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, but they're tacked on rather than central to the game. And it almost makes it into a kind of level structure, where what I really love about simulation games, and why I loved working on *Theme Park*, is the free-form nature of the world. As soon as you start putting level objectives in, you're starting to break up that free-form nature.

So what did you think of the *Theme Park* sequels then?

I thought they were... adequate. But I don't believe that a real *Theme Park 2* has been done yet.

Did Bullfrog incorporate any of your leftover design ideas for the sequels?

I've got no idea. When Peter and I left we had designs for *Theme Park 2*, I've got several on my machine. There's several floating around various places, so who knows? Certainly it's very different from what I would have done with *Theme Park 2*, let's put it that way.

How would it have been different?

Well, it's difficult to explain simply, but there are several things I would have done. Just to give you an example, the ride progression. In *Theme Park*, there were 40 rides, and you linearly researched them, and the next one just popped out. What I would like to do is have a kind of ride designer, where you said: I want something that's going to be spinning, something that's going to be fun for this age group... basically you put down design parameters, you hire a design team, and they come up with design blueprints. And you'd have 1,000 rides to discover, and you'd be able to personalise them, all of them, not just rollercoasters. And then you'd take it online...

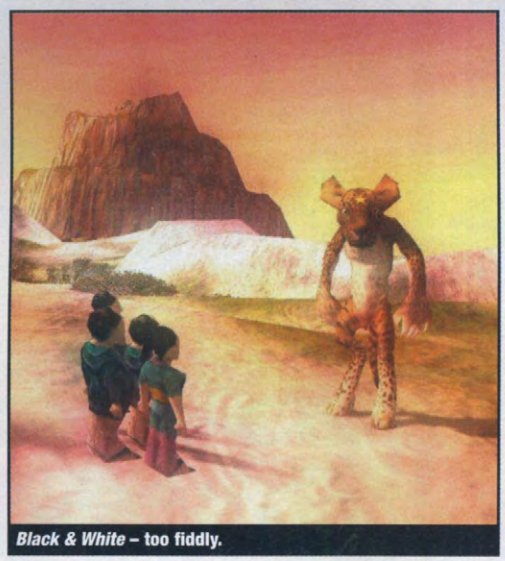
Online?

That's the other big thing I wanted to do. We wanted the original *Theme Park* to be online. There was actually online code, but it was never going to get past EA's QA. And you'd go online and actually go and visit other people's parks and compete against them. And you'd have unique rides that no one else



Demis made the ground-breaking *Theme Park* at the age of 15.


It all started here, but where's it all gong to end?


Black & White – too fiddly.


Games need more zebras.

would have, and unique parameters that only you'd have. It's that excitement of not knowing what you're going to get next – every game would be different.

So you don't think anyone's capitalised fully on this idea yet?

No. OK, you can design your own rollercoaster, which *RollerCoaster Tycoon* did first really. Although we had some rudimentary stuff in *Theme Park* – that's a great idea, but I think it needs to be developed much further. And then I would include lots of other things that go around the theme park, such as having special events – inviting Michael Jackson to open one of your rides, or the Queen. Bringing in a bit more of the wider world into your theme park world. Maybe deal with hotels, set them up like EuroDisney – actually theme the hotels and have people stay there. Not just running a theme park but a bit of the surrounding area as well.

***Sid Meier's Sim Golf* is trying to do something along those lines...**

Yeah, it's an interesting idea. I was very surprised by it at first, but it seems plausible.

Do you think there's much of a future for this type of management game?

I think there's a huge future for them. I don't think we're going to get much further just by going, well, let's do a new theme. But I've got a couple of themes in mind that I think are very obvious ones that would be very good.

Do you want to share those with us?

Well I may still do them, and there's quite a few companies doing this stuff, so I can't really. But the line of thinking you use to get to them is, well, theme parks are great because in real life there's nobody who doesn't enjoy them, and it's the same with this other subject matter. So it seems like an obvious thing to do, but having said that, I don't think that's enough anymore. I think we're going to have to go further technologically and design-wise to bring more excitement into the game, with things like storylines. *Theme Park* doesn't have a story, obviously it can't. *Republic* does have a sort of story, *Black & White* has a story. That's the thing that intrigues me, how to blend a free-form world with a storyline. The two are actually directly opposed. On one hand you want to tell a compelling story, but then I think that games should be free-form, because it's the only entertainment medium that can be.

"It's kind of balancing storytelling, which is inherently linear, with free-form worlds. This is what fascinates me"

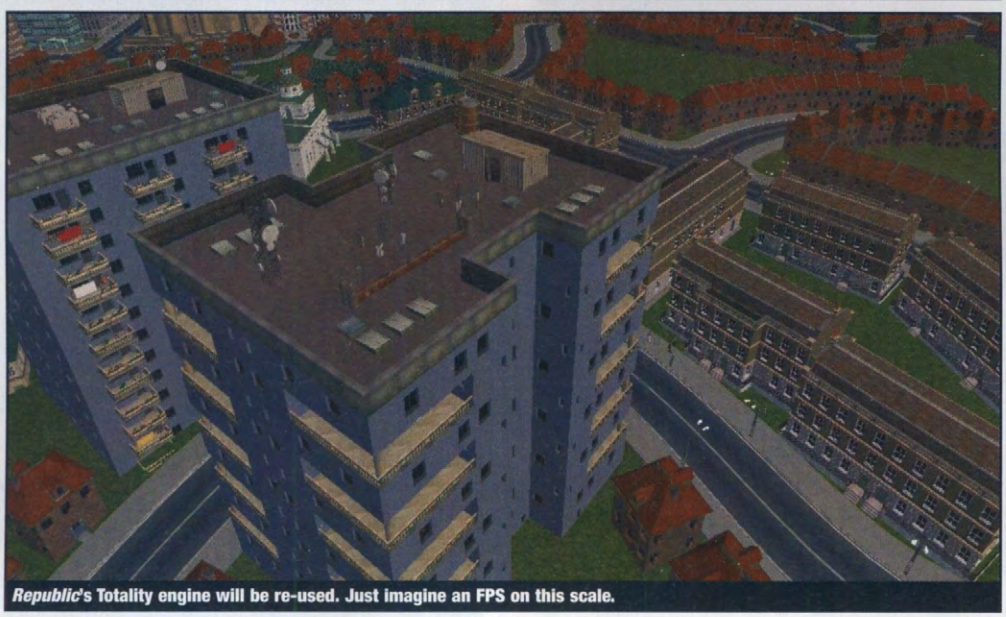
Linear games can be fun too though...

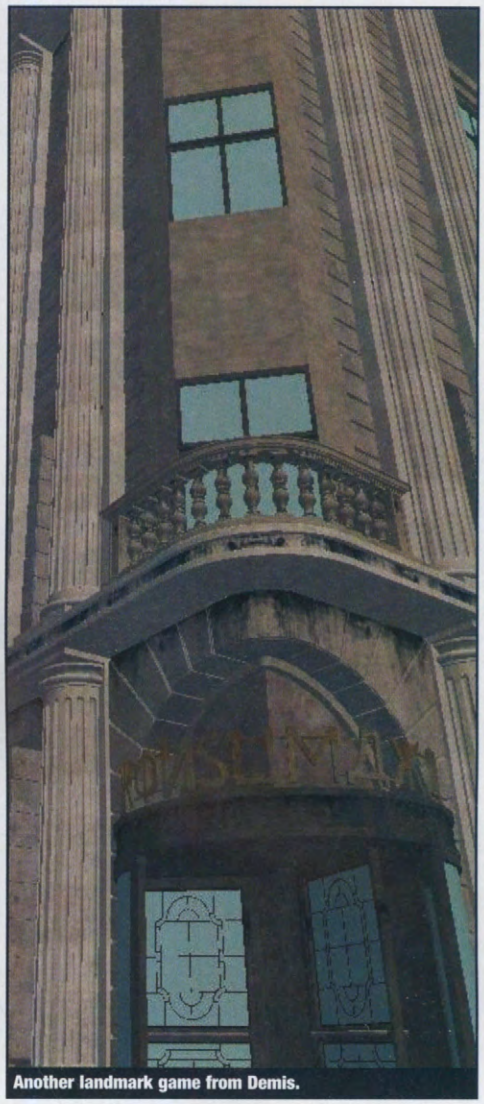
The way I think about it, if you want to tell a linear story – I mean I enjoy *Final Fantasy* and the rest as much as anyone else, but at the end of the day I think I'd rather read a great book or watch a great film than just press a button for each step of the way through an adventure. For me that's not what games should be doing, because there are other media that can do that as well or better, because they're less constrained than we are. But what we can do that no other medium can, is to create this free-form world and effectively let the player tell the story by what he does. Except that, obviously, you can't let the player get lost, and there always has to be something compelling that's shot into his world when he starts to get bored. It's kind of balancing storytelling, which is inherently linear, with free-form worlds. This is what fascinates me.

On to *Black & White* now – the response to that game has been very mixed, with many people complaining that it's too free-


Demis' current project, *Republic: The Revolution.*


Today the stimulation genre, tomorrow the world.


Republic's Totality engine will be re-used. Just imagine an FPS on this scale.


Another landmark game from Demis.

form, and that it requires too much micromanagement...
I think *B&W* is an amazing achievement, there can be no dispute about that, I would say. As for what kind of game it is, and who it appeals to, I think there is confusion there. I don't think it would appeal to every kind of gamer.

So a lot of people went out and bought it just because...
Yeah, because it's a landmark game, it got great reviews and so on. But in some ways I'm pleased to see that, because it supports originality and technical innovation. As for micromanagement, well I don't mind that, but maybe the micromanagement didn't fit with the creature raising, which was the most fun and cool thing about the game. There's a danger of that with any free-form game – too much micromanagement and not enough direction. And these two things are at the top of my list to be careful of in *Republic*.

Now that *B&W* is out, do you feel that the finished product lived up to the ambitions it set out with?
I think that's probably the thing it did best. It maintained this ambitious vision, and I reckon it delivered on the final game in terms of meeting that.

You left Lionhead and *B&W* to form Elixir in 1998. How different do you think the game would have been if you'd stayed on?
Well that's always a tricky question. For me, it would probably have been more strategy-weighted. I thought the final game was more RPG-weighted than strategy-weighted, and possibly it would have been weighted the other way.

Say you weren't in this lucky position of having worked on three really innovative games. If you were working in an environment where you had to work within a strict generic structure, for example if you had to make a driving game, what would you do to make it different?
Well, there are all kinds of ways you could make it different. A driving game is possibly the most difficult one to innovate on, because it's been done so many times. My favourite driving game ever, which I thought was the most innovative driving game, was *Stunt Car Racer* on the Amiga by Geoff Crammond, I think it's one of his greatest games. It was a fantastic game, and I would try and innovate in some sort of way like that.

"Simulation games are a lot of fun, but the hardcore gamer in me wants a climactic end"

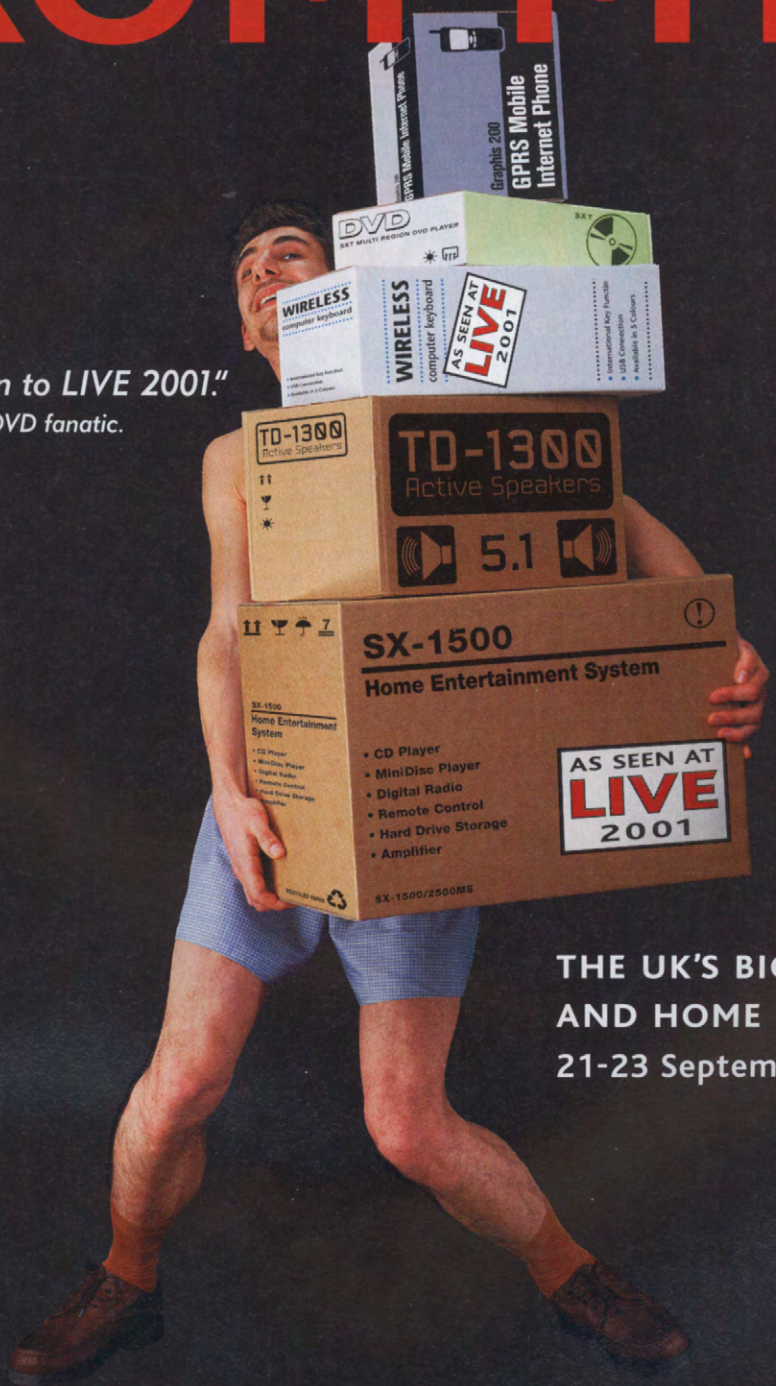
So get away from realism, make it more like a rollercoaster?
Yeah, I think so, just make it really quite wacky and multiplayer. I love things which you can configure and customise, so I'd try and build that into it. That's the kind of thing I'd try and do, as opposed to just going for a straight, 'let's try and beat *Gran Turismo* on graphics'. It's not very interesting.

How about say, an FPS?
Ah well, an FPS! I've got lots of interesting ideas for FPSs. Dunno if I should be saying this right now...

Are you saying there's a chance Elixir might do an FPS?
Yeah. What I really want to do is simulation combined with some other genre, an FPS for example, where the simulation and AI just brings the background story to life. I'm working on a few little online concepts as well. I've got lots of game ideas and I haven't decided what's going to be the next one. We are working on various other things at the moment anyway, which we haven't announced, but the next game I'm going to do after *Republic* will have some combination of the living city stuff I've talked about, and online play.

Well, well, an online FPS super-simulation using the cutting edge AI from *Republic*? Sounds like a winner to us, and as always you heard it first from *ZONE*. Unless it never happens, in which case you didn't hear nothing, right? In the meantime we have *Republic* itself to look forward to, currently due around spring next year. We'll be returning to Elixir for an in-depth look at the game in our next issue.

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Martin, 28, DVD fanatic.



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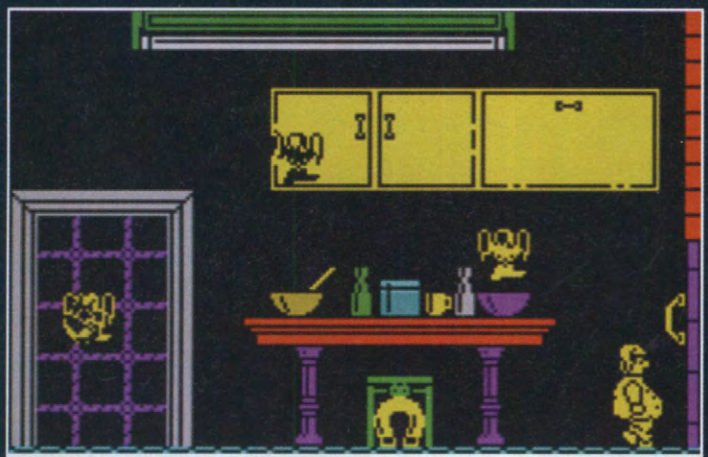
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OCTOBER 1984

RETRO ZONE

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO FORGET ABOUT CRUSTY OLD GAMES FOREVER, ALONG COMES RECURRING NIGHTMARE *Jason Moore*



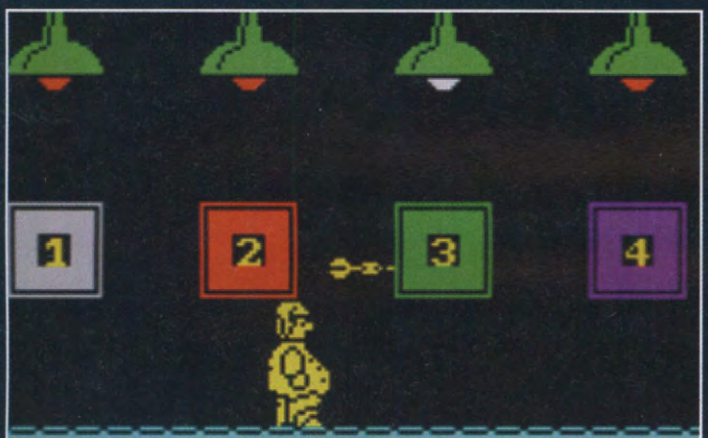
In the fridge at 3am, we've all been there.

PYJAMARAMA

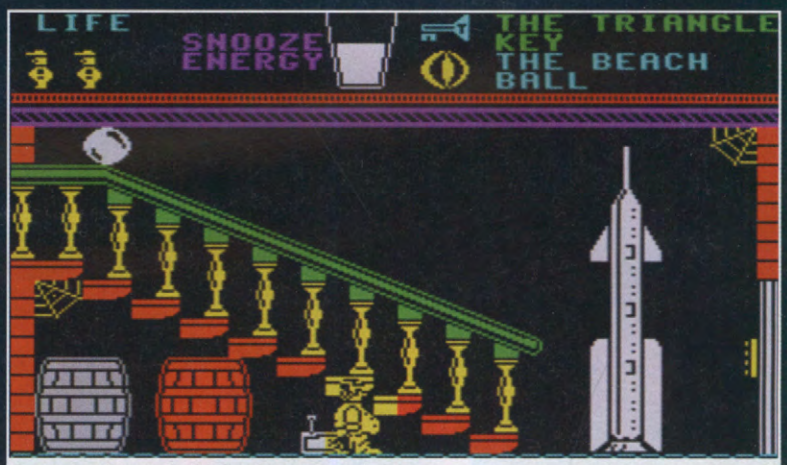
The triumphant return of bed set Wally

Nintendo has Mario, Sega has Sonic and on Spectrum there was of course Miner Willy. Just as popular on Sinclair's rubber-keyed wonder was Dave (Shiny) Perry's Wally Week, first seen in *Automania* and later to star in *Everyone's A Wally* and *Three Weeks In Paradise*. *Pyjamarama* was, however, the game that made Wally a star. Pixel-wise he was perhaps the biggest, and thanks to the Speccy's infamous colour clash, he was often used as evidence by C64 gamers that they had the best machines.

Somewhere between a platform game and an adventure, *Pyjamarama* had you controlling Wally as he roamed his house trying to find the key to the alarm clock in order to wake himself. Yep, Wally was asleep and you played his wide-awake incorporeal other self. Being caught between a dream and a nightmare gave Mikro-Gen license to create bizarre levels, and a rather nice *Space Invaders* sub game.



Graphics may be better these days, but the puzzles certainly aren't.



Remember the wonderful Spectrum colour clash?

THE BEST OF THE REST



WANTED! MONTY MOLE (C64, Spectrum 48K)

Wanted! Monty Mole hit the headlines thanks to its slight link to Arthur Scargill and the miner's strike. In reality, it wasn't much more than a simple platformer, borrowing heavily from *Jet Set Willy*. A load of sequels followed, notable for their C64 soundtracks.



HIGH NOON (C64)

With gameplay mechanics stolen from Atari's *Berzerk*, *High Noon* had depth, with buildings to hide in and a mixture of enemies, from dynamite-carrying bandits to horse riding outlaws. Throw in an addictive SID chip version of the *High Noon* theme, and you have a C64 title that's still worth playing.



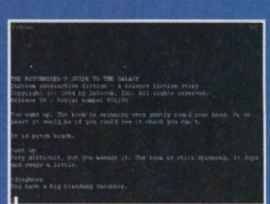
KOKOTONI WILF (C64, Spectrum 48K)

Kokotoni Wilf's story involved travelling between different time zones, battling with dinosaurs while trying to locate the missing pieces of amulet. But you really just controlled a tiny hovering sprite through poorly connected, flickery screens. Even stranger was the fact that the gaming press loved it.



SELECT 1 (Spectrum)

Unfortunately with our failing memorys we can't quite recall if *Select 1* was *the* first compilation, it was certainly *one* of the first. Made up of 12 games, it set a trend by offering a disparate mix of the good and the bad and the minging, *Mr Wimpy*, *Timegate* and *Hunchback* being perhaps the best of them.



HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY (PC)

About as attractive and as difficult to master as DOS, *Hitchhiker's* had some redeeming features – it was imaginative, funny and brilliantly written. Based, of course, on the late Douglas Adams' radio script, TV series and book it become one of the biggest games of the year.

‹‹ STOP PRESS ››

GAMING NEWS FOR OCTOBER '84

✪ In the UK, the ZX Spectrum managed to fight off virtually all competition apart from the Commodore 64. However, instead of taking the games scene to a new level by concentrating on its super 16-bit sequel, the flawed Sinclair QL, Sinclair was getting ready to release its new pocket TV. Something of a half-pint measure, Sinclair did unveil the Spectrum Plus, a 48K Speccy with a QL-style keyboard. With games accounting for more sales of their hardware than they would like to admit, Sinclair didn't fully embrace entertainment software for another year, by which time it was too little, too late.

✪ The US games world continued to disintegrate, as the much hyped "great videogames crash" plunged to new depths. Atari's VCS/2600 replacement, the aptly titled Atari 5200, failed to capture the public's imagination. The Commodore 64 had a small hold on the home computing fraternity, but it was the Apple 2 that captured the largest share of the market. The American disapproval of cassette based software left the sector reliant on expensive 5.25in disk drives and software, which in turn kept the sector comparatively small.

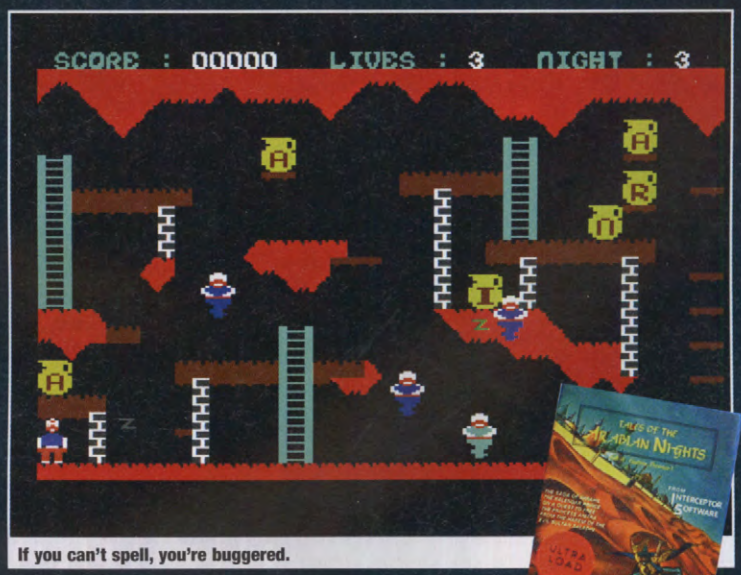
✪ In Japan, Nintendo was already winning the console race with the Famicom. However, the fledgling MSX computer series was starting to reach the mass market. Major electronics manufactures, such as Toshiba, Sony, JVC and Yamaha, made their own versions of the hardware, all of which were completely inter-compatible with other producer's peripherals and software. Possibly the biggest reason for the surge in interest was the cartridge software that was released by Arcade giant, Konami. This month saw the release of two of the biggest games on the format, one of which, *Track & Field*, brought four events from the smash hit arcade machine to the home.



While the sound was arcade perfect, the in-game sprites lacked the same colour as the original and the scrolling was rather slow. To improve the experience Konami released a dedicated arcade style controller, which provided those super strong buttons that don't break if you bash them too hard. Due to cartridge size limitations, *Track & Field 2* had to be released to complete the event roster. The other classic release was *Antarctic Adventure*, a bizarre racing game that put you in control of a penguin. Grab the fish, and reach the next flag before the time runs out. 100 per cent ecologically friendly.



Just like *Magic Carpet.*



If you can't spell, you're buggered.



The music was great for the time.

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Full-on Eastern promise

This month also saw the release of one of the best, yet most ignored, Commodore 64 games, *Tales Of The Arabian Nights* by Interceptor. The game was a single screen, ladders and ropes platformer, within which you had to collect handfuls of giant jugs. (No, this isn't an early X-rated videogame nasty, it just wouldn't sound as funny if we put giant pots would it.) Anyway, each jug had a letter written upon it, and you had to collect them in the correct order to spell Arabian, or other such simple messages. This natural order added considerable depth, making the simple screens layouts incredibly challenging. Indeed, if you could manage to dodge all the moving enemies and get through the first level within five attempts, then you were something of a gaming hero. The icing on the cake was the in-game music and speech, a delicate Arabic melody drifted over the entire proceedings, providing all the atmosphere of a Turkish Delight advert.

TOP 10 OCTOBER 1984

ALL FORMATS

1 **JET SET WILLY** • Spectrum
2 **JETPAC** • Commodore 64
3 **FULL THROTTLE** • Spectrum
4 **T.L.L** • Spectrum
5 **SABRE WULF** • Spectrum
6 **MATCH POINT** • Spectrum
7 **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** • Spectrum
8 **JACK & THE BEANSTALK** • Spectrum
9 **VALHALLA** • Spectrum
10 **TRASHMAN** • Spectrum

✪ Quite an odd chart, only one C64 classic, and the painfully slow *Valhalla* in at nine. Favourite game of the lot has to be *Trashman*, like *Paperboy*, but without the bike, oh, and the papers.

✪ *Retronaught* Jason Moore *is the Editor of* Retrogames *magazine, runs* ***www.retrogames.co.uk*** *and also sells old games and hardware through his own shop.*

ON THE CD

This month's CD is looking at you with big puppy dog eyes and begging to be taken home and played with

WORDS Rhianna Pratchett **DISCS** Matt Cheshire and Lee Cocker

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BEFORE YOU DIAL... IF YOU ARE CALLING THE HELPLINE, PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call. If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault. Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs

Many of the programs on our cover CDs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run. Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only

DISCLAIMER

This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it. Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.



ON THE CD DEMOS



MAGIC & MAYHEM: THE ART OF MAGIC

Virgin · Disc 1

EXCLUSIVE



176% more magic than any other demo.

If this sequel to the original *Magic & Mayhem* follows in the ample footsteps of its older brother, then RPG fans should be in for a man-sized treat. Take on the role of Aurax, a young wizard caught up in troubled times and battle through a series of quests to reveal the beginnings of an epic 3D story. You'll get to meet a few party members and test out the unique spell system, as well as taking the game online in the frantic multiplayer battle mode. If you want to know how we think the sequel stacks up, check out the review on p66.

CONTROLS
Mouse

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02

Eidos · Disc 1

Round about this time of the year, about a month into the new football season, two things invariably happen. Firstly, the hopes and dreams of millions of young men are shattered as they realise their football team is absolute muck. This then leads to the release of the latest version of *Championship Manager*, where the same blokes try to show what would have happened had they been in charge. And, 99.9 per cent of the time, on-screen events replicate real-world misery, but things could be worse. You could support Chester City like Steve Hill and live forever trapped in a weird hybrid of real/virtual non-league football. This demo gives you the chance to find out what the hell we're talking about with a massive half-season to play through before your time runs out.

Controls
Keyboard, sheepskin coat

EXCLUSIVE



Get the lad in the Premiership.

TRIBES 2

Vivendi · Disc 1

EXCLUSIVE

It's far too easy in *Tribes 2* to get carried away with soaring across the beautifully detailed landscapes with gracefulness and ease, and forget that you actually have to shoot people. Until your find yourself face down kissing turf that is (probably worth remembering then). This demo supports one Capture The Flag and one hunter's map.

CONTROLS

Configure your own within the game



The *Tribes 2* demo comes with bots, so you can get good before going online.



EXCLUSIVE

Neeowwww, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, etc...

IL-2 STURMOVIK

Ubi Soft · Disc 1

This looks set to be to flight sims what *Counter-Strike* is to the FPS, this demo includes three flyable planes (the IL2-M2 Russian ground attack plane, the BF-109G-2 German fighter and the Soviet P-39N-1 Airacobra fighter), a single-player Smolensk map and online support for a four-player dogfight.

CONTROLS

Move control surfaces	Joystick/Arrow keys	**Fire rockets**	Alt & Space
Rudder Rudder	Pedals/Z & X	**Toggle landing gear**	G
Change Engine Throttle	Joystick throttle/+ & -	**Raise/lower landing flaps**	F/V
Change Throttle	1-9	**Start/Stop Engine**	I
Engine boost mode	W	**Wheel Brakes**	B
Fire	Joystick buttons	**Autopilot**	A
Drop bombs	Space	**Eject**	Ctrl & E

ANACHRONOX

Eidos Interactive · Disc 2

Sylvester 'Sly' Boots isn't your average hero-type. A washed-up detective who's more bum than butch, he's a character we can all identify with. Despite being crafted around the somewhat antiquated *Quake II* engine, *Anachronox* has gameplay charm and genuine humour in spadefuls. Slip into Sly's rather whiffy boots and explore some of the shady *Anachronox* world.

CONTROLS

Forwards	W/Up arrow	**Last object**	I
Backwards	S/Down arrow	**Mission Objectives**	F1
Left	A/Left arrow	**Inventory**	F5
Right	D/Right arrow	**Take Picture**	F11
World Skill	Ctrl + Left Mouse button		
World	Space		



Anachronox is a game that's destined to go unnoticed, which is a damn shame.



Watch out for the multiplayer demo next issue.

RED FACTION

THQ · Disc 2

You think it's going to be a normal day. You wake up, have your Weetabix, go to work down the mines and suddenly you're swept into the middle of a violent rebellion. Guide Parker, an unwitting fugitive miner through a comprehensive training mission and keep him alive when the it starts hitting the fan. For more info, check out our review of this brand new FPS on p60.

CONTROLS

Forwards	W	**Primary fire**	Left mouse button
Backwards	S	**Secondary fire**	Right mouse button
Left	A	**Force reload**	R
Right	D	**Switch weapon**	1-4/ Mouse wheel
Jump	Space	**Use**	Enter
Crouch	C		



Loads of big robots having a great big battle.

MECHCOMMANDER 2

Microsoft · Disc 2

Guide a few hundred tons of metal death machine, in the form of three Mech units through a seemingly quiet disused airbase. Root out any enemy forces along the way, while learning the basics of controlling and repairing your pack of lethal Metal Mickeys in one of the best strategy releases of the year.

CONTROLS

Short-range attack	S
Medium-range attack	M
Long-range attack	L
Ammo conservation	A
Jump	J
Fire from current position	C
Guard	G
Select visible units	E
Force fire	F
Power down	Page down
Power up	Page up
Eject	End
Run	Space
Zoom	-/+

WORMS WORLD PARTY

Virgin Interactive · Disc 2

This is worm warfare at its very squeakiest. The demo includes the opportunity to play timed games against the computer over two customised landscapes, as well as a pole-to-pole and training mission. More importantly you and your mates can get yourself some multiplayer worm action in the four-team multiplayer mode.



Multiplayer mayhem.

CONTROLS

Scroll landscape	Mouse
Select weapon	Left Mouse Button
Select/Re-select target	Left Mouse Button
Weapon menu	Right Mouse Button
Worm Left	Left arrow
Worm Right	Right arrow
Jump/drop	Return
Back jump	Return twice
Vertical jump	Backspace
Backflip	Backspace twice
Aim up	Up arrow
Aim down	Down arrow
Drop	Space
Set strength	Hold Space
Set bounce type	+/-
Set fuse time	1-5
Centre	C
Next worm	Tab
Action Replay	R
Weapon shortcuts	F1-F12

MADDEN NFL 2002

EA · Disc 1

American football typifies everything that's wrong with American culture. Take a simple concept, turn it into a trumped-up showbiz affair with padding and then keep stopping the action to remind people that it's about time they crammed another McBurger into their mouths. Still, some people seem to like it and if you're one of them then why not try out this demo of one of the best versions available for the PC?

CONTROLS

Gamepad



Go get 'em cowboy.

STAR MONKEY

Small Rockets · Disc 1

Fans of *Star Tripper* will love this traditional vertical-scrolling shooter. Power-ups, extended power-ups and level bosses make up the frantic action, before you decide to move onto jumpers for goal posts and baked beans for tea.

CONTROLS

Up	Up arrow/W
Down	Down arrow/S
Left	Left arrow/A
Right	Right arrow/D
Pause	P
Exit	Esc



Retro action at its best.

THE STING!

JoWood · Disc 2

We said pants, but what do you say? Embark upon a life of crime and see if you're a Guy Ritchie or a Reggie Kray. Consider this demo to be a public service warning, and play it before you even think about shelling out £30 for the full version.

CONTROLS

Mouse



Playing this game hurts.

PATRICIAN II

Infogrames · Disc 1

A real-time trading game set in medieval northern Europe during the 1300s, for up to eight players. Build up from a handful of buildings to a thriving city. But beware, sometimes diplomacy is not enough and you will have to take to the high sea to defend your empire.

CONTROLS

Mouse



Wish you were here?

ON THE CD MODWATCH CD2

WinZip 8.0
Neo Cairo
AirFlight UT Patch
Official SWAT Mod PC ZONE V-1.2b
Proball Beta 1.0

ON THE CD PATCHES CD1

Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal v26498
Gangsters 2 v1.0.6
Age Of Empires 2: Conquerers v1.0c
Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction v1.09
World War II Online v1.0 to 1.21
World War II Online v1.22
The PC ZONE Patches Database

ON THE CD PATCHES CD2

Max Payne v1.01
Operation Flashpoint Ultimate Upgrade #1
WWII Online v1.2.1
Quake III Arena Point Release (1.29h) Beta patch
BG2: Shadows of Amn v23037
Legends of Might & Magic v1.0 to v1.1
Tropico v1.4
Startopia v1.1
Sudden Strike Forever UK Patch

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 142 where the Lambster brings you a whole heap of *Unreal Tournament* goodies and maps for *Gunman Chronicles* and *Dungeon Keeper 2*.

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Alone in Dark 2 & 4	FA P L F'ball Man '00	Red Faction	Vagrant Story
Alundra 1 & 2	Fear Effect 1 & 2	Resident Evil Series	Vanishing Point
Army Men Series	FIFA 2001	Rogue Spear	Virtua Tennis
Banjo Kazooie	Final Fantasy 7, 8 & 9	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Wario Land 3
Banjo Tooie	Gold Pokemon	Rumble Racing	WCW Backstage Asst
Blade	Golden Eye	Shadowman	World Chmp Snooker
Bouncer	Gran Turismo 1 & 2	Shenmue	World's S. P. Chases
Broken Sword 1 & 2	GTA 1 & 2	Silent Hill	WWF No Mercy
C-12 Final Resistance	GT Advance Champ.	Simpson Wrestling	WWF Smackdown1&2
Castlevania	Half Life	Simpsons Treehouse	Xena Warrior Princess
Champ. Man. 2000	Harvest Moon	Sims	X-Files
Chase the Express	Hidden & Dangerous	Skies of Arcadia	Zelda (All Games)
Civilisation 2	Hogs of War	Sky Odyssey	
Code Veronica (R.Evil)	ISS Pro Evolution 2	Smackdown 2	
Colin McRae Rally 2	LMA Manager 2001	Sonic Adventure 1&2	
Comm & Conq Series	Max Payne	Soul Reaver	
Crash Band. Series	M Hoffman's Pro BMX	Spyro 1, 2 & 3	
Crazy Taxi 1 & 2	Medal of Honor 1 & 2	SSX - Snowboarding	
D. M. Freestyle BMX	MediEvil 2	Star Trek: Invasion	
Diddy Kong Racing	Metal Gear Solid	Star Wars Phant Men.	
Digimon World	Metro. Street Racer	Star Wars: Jedi P Bats	
Dino Crisis 1 & 2	Mission Impossible	Star Wars: R. Squad	
Discworld 2 & Noir	Monster Rancher	Stupid Invaders	
Donkey Kong 64	Onimusha: Warlords	Summoner	
Dracula Resurrection	Operation Flashpoint	Super Mario Advance	
Dragon Warrior Mons	Perfect Dark	Syphon Filter 1 & 2	
Dragonball Z F. Bout	Phantasy Star Online	The Sims	
Driver 1 & 2	Player Man. '00 & '01	The World is Not En.	
Duke Nukem Series	Pokemon (All Colour)	Theme Park	
Dune	Pokemon Stadium	Time Splitters	
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EXTENDEDPLAY

Three games again from the *PC ZONE* kitchen of delights, all seasoned and gently fried to delight your gaming taste buds. Gorefest fans can thrill to the classic *Unreal Tournament* and *Half-Life* offshoot *Gunman Chronicles*, while those who like it dark 'n' dingy will love *Dungeon Keeper 2*

MASTERCHEF Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

ON THE CD

Installation of all these maps and mods is pretty straightforward, but remember to always check out .zip files for any special instructions.

Unreal Tournament mods are all self-extracting files and need to be pointed at your *UT* directory. Maps have two files in them – UNR and UTX – and these need to go into your Unreal Tournament/maps and /textures sub-directories respectively. Once you've made sure you're running the latest version of *UT* with all the bonus packs installed (a couple of maps use pack 4 textures), they can be selected in the usual manner.

The maps for *Gunman Chronicles* are .BSP files and need to be unzipped into your Sierra/Gunman/rewolf/maps directory. They can then be selected via the multiplayer create-game menu for LAN play.

Dungeon Keeper maps need version 1.7 to work, so make sure you've patched your copy of *DK2*. Copy the .KWD and .KLD files into your data/editor/maps directory and the .BMP files into the Thumbnails directory. Then choose your poison and get stuck in.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

You voted it the best First-Person Action game and Game of the Year in our 2000 awards and with good reason. *UT* is the mainstream gamers' choice of FPS – it's better looking than *Half-Life* and not as in-yer-face as *Quake III*. It has a great range of weapons, is eminently moddable, has great bot support, and is an absolute blast online. What more is there?

Tower of Baal (Deathmatch Map)

Author: Chicoverde
Filename: dm-baal.zip
Size: 2.5Mb
Rating:

Tower of Baal is one seriously spooky map.

Set in the temple of the great and ancient demon himself, Baal's layout of a couple of open spaces with smaller corridors between lends itself to some frantic action when players' paths cross, and the relatively small size of the map makes this a common event. There are enough weapons and health packs dotted around, and plenty of spookiness to keep fans looking over their shoulders.

Conquest (CTF Map)

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: ctf-conquest.zip
Size: 1.3Mb
Rating:



Conquest is small for a CTF, so action can be fast and furious.

Conquest is a capture-the-flag map from the old skool – two castles, a narrow canyon between them, a water route to escape when stealing the flag – and no more! The only nod to the more feature-packed style of map is the sniper tower on the front of each castle, but its view and practicality is limited. This map is all about fighting your way in and out to get your points… just the way it should be.

XMaps 221 (Utility)

Author: TouchStone
Filename: xmaps-umod.zip
Size: 615Kb
Rating:

Xmaps is a great utility that should be in every *UT* fan's box of tricks. It's designed to allow players – especially those with a lot of mods installed – to have a far greater range of control over their game, both in practice and multiplayer modes. Xmaps can handle up to 100 custom map lists with as many as 150 maps in each (if your hard disk is big enough). They can also operate Mutator lists, match player numbers to author recommendations, match teams to keep games even, skip or repeat levels, change game types or maps mid-game… and more. It's outstanding, in fact.

Aggressive Tendencies (Deathmatch Map)

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: dm-aggressive2.zip
Size: 962Kb
Rating:



Not a good place to stand on a banana skin…

A neat deathmatch map with lots of narrow corridors, plenty of weapons, auto jump-pads and moving platforms to get between the levels quickly, and a lava pool to catch out the unwary. The intricacy of the map needs at least six players to do it justice, and it would make a great team-deathmatch, but set yourself up against a gaggle of bots and you'll get a good workout.

Event Horizon (CTF Map)

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: ctf-eventhorizon.zip
Size: 1.2Mb
Rating:



Guard that flag with your life!

Event Horizon is another capture-the-flag map and this time with a spaceship theme. It's well designed with some superb use of detail and texture, highlighting the hi-tech environment. Like all the best maps there is more than one way through to the flag, but each can be defended if the teams work well. Sniper positions again have a commanding view, but ammunition for the long rifles is thankfully limited.

Frantic (Deathmatch Map)

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: dm-frantic.zip
Size: 1Mb
Rating:



Frantic is a great map, and very atmospheric.

NET ADDRESSES

www.pczone.co.uk
It does exactly what it says on the box.

www.planetunreal.com
The biggest *UT* resource of them all with up-to-date news and links to hundreds of maps, mods, skins and more.

www.planetunreal.com/plutonic
Homepage of Chris "Plutonic" Blundell, creator of many of this month's maps. Top stuff.

www.planetunreal.com/chicoverde
Homepage of El Chico, a couple of whose maps are featured here. There are some real gems to be found at this one.

www.planetunreal.com/cliffyb
One of the best collections of top-class *UT* maps around. Get a map from this site and you know it's going to be good.

A great map with lots of outdoor space and a gothic cathedral feel to it. Again bots run this map very well and will grab everything they can. There are lots of weapons around to keep everyone blasting, so the pace will never slow down if you have more than a couple of players. Textures and lighting are generally good, although the latter is maybe a bit overdone outside – not that you'll have time to notice.

Unreal Fortress v1 Build 600 (Mod)

Author: Azmo and the *UTF* team
Filename: UnF_build_600_full.zip & Build600Update.zip
Size: 55.5Mb
Rating: ★★★★★



↑ *Fortress* has an easy-to-use menu structure.

A definite essential for any fan – if you haven't got this one already then grab it now for the best in carnage that *UT* has to offer. It's a clone of the great class-based *Half-Life* mod *Team Fortress Classic* and not only offers all the fun of its *HL* equivalent, but it makes good use of that fabulous *UT* engine too. This latest version has no less than 100 tweaks and bug-fixes, some outstanding new maps and new weapons to boot. Check out www.unrealfortress.com for full class and gameplay details, and enjoy…

Night's Edge: Wet Works (Beta 5 – Mod)

Author: Quintin Stone & the Night's Edge team
Filename: NightsEdge_0_9_3.exe & NE_093_to_095.zip
Size: 11.2Mb
Rating: ★★★★☆



↑ Check out the weapons detailing in *Night's Edge* – this Steyr is top class.

Night's Edge is a *Counter-Strike* clone for you to get your cloak 'n' dagger jollies and although maps are limited so far it's looking like a good effort in the making. Layouts and skins are good and the weapon models and effects are up there with the best. The HUD is a wealth of information showing armour, stamina, weapons load-out and more. *Night's Edge* is big on realism already but the team say that the best is yet to come, so it's definitely one to watch.

Europa (Deathmatch Map)

Author: Chicoverde
Filename: dm-Europa.zip
Size: 2.9Mb
Rating: ★★★☆☆



↑ Europa has some great indoor textures, and outside isn't half-bad either.

Set on board a huge Skaarj cargo ship, Europa is a top-class deathmatch map, but one that needs plenty of players to get it going. Bots are fine, but get this running on a LAN for real fun. Interior textures are great and very atmospheric – almost more *Aliens Vs Predator* than *Unreal* – and the outside is just as good. Try basking in the light from the moon Europa before grabbing the redeemer and kicking some enemy butt.

Compulsive (Deathmatch Map)

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: dm-compulsive.zip
Size: 443Kb
Rating: ★★★★★



↑ Levels and weapons means you're always somebody's target.

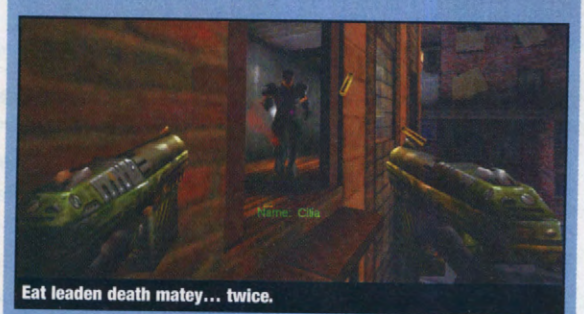
An absolutely essential map for any *UT* fan with lots of vertical action and cross-level shooting opportunities. Stay away from the ground level if you can as there is no cover and players on the higher levels will send down a barrage of rockets as soon as you appear. This includes the bots, which play this map very effectively. Texture and lighting use is top class and the whole map has a very 'together' feel.

URBAN TERROR (DEATHMATCH MAP)

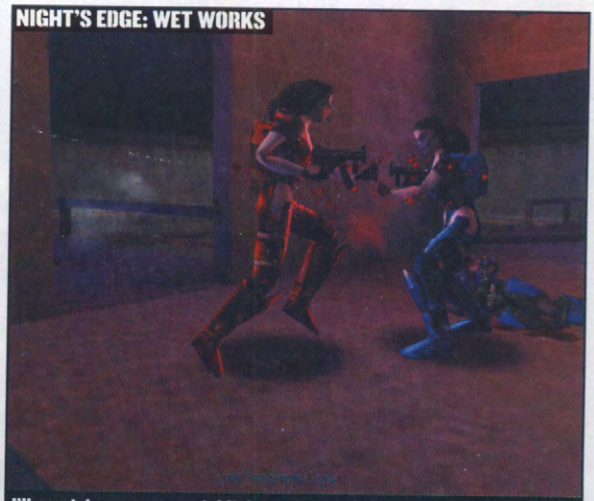
MAP OF THE MONTH URBAN TERROR

Author: Chris "Plutonic" Blundell
Filename: dm-synapse.zip
Size: 5Mb
Rating: ★★★★★

A huge effort and worth every moment of the blood, sweat and tears that must have gone into it. Urban Terror recreates a city block based on actual location photos and is one of the best 'real-world environment' maps around. Chris Blundell has spared no expense in making a hugely enjoyable map with new textures, atmospheric lighting, good (though not too generous) weapon placement and a nice mix of tight and open spaces. It's a big file but one it would be very remiss of you not to have.



Eat leaden death matey… twice.



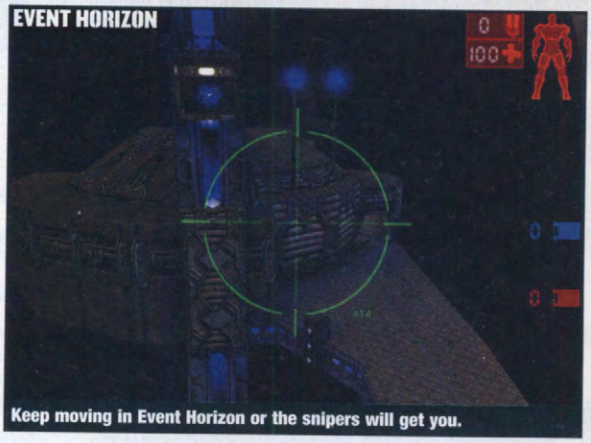
I'll scratch your eyes out, bitch.



Gothic deathmatch action at its best.



Sniper position covers the bridge approach in Conquest.



Keep moving in Event Horizon or the snipers will get you.

ABODE 50

MAP OF THE MONTH ABODE 50

Author: Reid Kimball
Filename: abode50.zip
Size: 487Kb
Rating: ★★★★☆

Abode 50 is a nice desert location where you'll find a network of underground mine passages with a couple of working lifts, two buildings (a house and stables) and a tank rocking on the edge of a chasm – neat, but unfortunately it can't be pushed over. This is an enjoyable battle experience as the map is big enough to collect a fair amount of ammo without having to constantly fight for survival, but not so big that boredom sets in.



If only that tank could be pushed down the Abode 50 mine shaft.

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

Born from smash-hit *Half-Life*, *Gunman Chronicles* could have been just a mod but instead wound up a full commercial release with the approval of Valve themselves. New monsters, new weapons, new environments and a thrilling new storyline added flesh to the already impressive (and familiar) bones to create one of the bargain buys of the year.

Asteroid
Author: Psycho
Filename: asteroid.zip
Size: 346Kb
Rating: ★★★☆☆

Asteroid is a small arena in a spaceship environment. The layout is simple – you run in a circle around the ship and try to stay alive whilst nipping into the outlying rooms to pick up bigger guns. Watch out for the airlock room – if the control room button is pressed while you're in there, you're dead meat… vacuum-packed.

Stellar Outpost
Author: Andreas Wahl
Filename: stellar_outpost.zip
Size: 558Kb
Rating: ★★★★☆

A large layout set on board a space station, Stellar Outpost nicely mixes rooms, corridors and lifts to create a very effective map. Weapons and health are in good supply, the sound effects fit in nicely, and there are some neat tricks here too. Would make a good CTF map if a tad bigger.

Starship
Author: Torben Sominka
Filename: starship.zip
Size: 328Kb
Rating: ★★★★☆

Starship is all about action, and let's face it, that can only be a good thing. It's small, with little to keep the combatants apart, so furious action is 100 per cent guaranteed. Weapons and health packs abound, and you'll need both to last more than a few seconds. Starship might be too fast-paced for some people, but if you want a blastabout LAN session then this map's the one for you.

NET ADDRESSES

www.rewolfsoftware.com
Rewolf are the clever chaps behind the game. Check 'em out.

www.3dactionplanet.com/gunman
News, reviews, game hints, downloads, cheats and more.

www.gunmanmaps.77th.com
A bare bones site, but a fair collection of *Gunman* maps.

www.half-life-gunman.de
It's all in German unfortunately, but probably has the biggest list of downloadable maps about. Worth a gamble!

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Evil creatures, heroes, dungeons, traps, spells and more all go together to keep gamers happy in a god game with a difference. *Dungeon Keeper 2* is the game where it's just soooooooo good to be bad. Lure evil minions into your gloomy subterranean redoubt and nurture them into deadly assassins; set traps to catch the unwary who may wander into your domain before letting your troops loose to seal their fate. Unmissable stuff for horny devils everywhere.

Evil Good
Author: Evil One
Filename: Evil_Good_v1-7.zip
Size 16Kb
Rating: ★★★★★



Evil Good is just fantastic for three-player LAN battling.

A 49 x 49 multiplayer map where dungeon keepers get to choose whether they wish to attract good or evil creatures. There's no better map to fritter away the hours with two friends over a LAN.

Incursions
Author: Evil One
Filename: Incursions_v1-7.zip
Size: 21Kb
Rating: ★★★★☆



Incursions is four-player mayhem on a huge scale.

A 100 x 100 map for long evenings. Four players start miles from each other, giving ample chance to build the dungeon of their dreams. Although the author has recently made the centre more accessible, it still feels a little too distant.

Allies
Author: Evil One
Filename: Allies_v1-7.zip
Size: 15Kb
Rating: ★★★★☆

A 59 x 59 map for four players. The best way of playing is with two teams of two, and thanks to the way the allied dungeon hearts are arranged, it makes it easy to create one huge underground stronghold.

Volcano
Author: Evil One
Filename: Volcano_v1-7.zip
Size: 20Kb
Rating: ★★★★★



Head-to-head battling at its very best.

A 49 x 49 map for two players, with each heart separated by impassable rock. The dungeon area includes a Mercenary Portal, three gem seams, an Elite Vampire, plus Heroes in the central volcano. Great fun.

Elite Keeper
Author: Evil One
Filename: Elite_Keeper_v1-7.zip
Size: 31Kb
Rating: ★★★☆☆

An 89 x 89 skirmish map designed to attract every elite creature in the realm. A long procession of sorry-ass Heroes make for easy slaughter, and more gems than you can shake an imp at.

THE INQUISITION

MAP OF THE MONTH THE INQUISITION

Author: Evil One
Filename: Rage_v1-7.zip
Size: 61Kb
Rating: ★★★★★

A 70 x 70 layout and a long and arduous quest map that requires a great deal of thinking. Horny has been captured by the Grand Inquisitor and it's up to you and your cohorts to find and rescue him, before setting out to destroy the Inquisitor himself. If you're not in possession of friends or a LAN, this map should be ideal to keep you entertained for some time. It's a worthy addition to any keeper's toy chest and one the author himself recommends.



A challenging map that will keep you occupied for hours.

NET ADDRESSES

www.dk2.europe.com/uk/index
The official *DK2* website and the place to get that essential v1.7 patch. You'll also find desktop themes, news, forums and more.

www.geocities.com/theevilonesdk2page/
Homepage of The Evil One, whose maps you'll find above. Chock full with maps, hints, sounds, fonts and more.

www.dkheart.hypermart.net/index/index
Still a good source of *DK2* treats and information with lots of downloads to keep you busy.

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COMMENT



People go on and on about AI, but it only works for one in two couples or something. Sorry, we are talking about artificial insemination aren't we?

SHOOTING OFF Mike Anderiesz

There are plenty of terms that have been hijacked by the games industry. Virtual reality, that's one – true 3D, there's another (true 3D on a 2D plane, whatever next?) In fact, if there's a high-tech-sounding phrase, you can be sure the games industry will jump on its back and ride until lame.

Surely the biggest of these is AI, two letters that have been systematically abused by the games industry for years. Do kettles, TVs or washing machines claim to be intelligent? No, because they're not, and if they were they'd know it. But according to the shelves at HMV, the game inside almost every box contains 'advanced AI', as if a disparate community of hairy programmers could have cracked a concept some of the brightest minds in the world have been wrestling with for 30 years.

"Do kettles, TVs or washing machines claim to be intelligent? No, because they're not, and if they were they'd know it"

Artificial Intelligence is something the leading Japanese and American think-tanks are increasingly keen to play down. Still some way short of the level of a domestic cat, they talk optimistically of primate-like machine intelligence by the year 2025. These are seriously smart guys, free from the pressures of having to increase Lara's breast size just a couple more pixels before release. If they can't do it, then who can?

Meanwhile, the current paradigm of videogame AI is *Quake III Arena*'s multiplayer bot, admittedly a good interpretation of Jack Russell (ie it runs around a lot and occasionally jumps) but hardly what most people would call intelligent. And yet developers across the globe are concentrating on emulating such models while avoiding the real problem: that AI cannot operate without a logical environment to work in, and there's precious little logic to be found in videogames.

What do I mean by game logic? Well, a consistent and credible relationship between cause and effect, for a start. In the real world, if you walk slowly towards a policeman with an outstretched gun you will be arrested or shot, every time. Likewise, if you are Solid Snake, the stealthy hero of *Metal Gear Solid*, approaching the guards head on will either trip an alarm or attract their attention. Oh... unless you hide in a cardboard box, stick your gun out the front and slowly mince across the floor towards them. Then, guards will ignore you as if such things happened on a daily basis. Why waste time on programming an NPC to clutch its knee or elbow as he falls, when he so patently should not be there in the first place?

And it's not all strategy either. In a racing game, why do I have to drive the perfect racing line, choose the correct tyres, and pit when I'm damaged, when the CPU drivers don't? When I play an RPG or RTS why do my allies fall under friendly fire but my enemies experience no such problems? It's not just unfair, it's the very antithesis of AI. We learn nothing because we subconsciously know such knowledge will be useless.

Of course, programming the CPU to remember every calibration and react accordingly might add years to the development time. Alternatively, if just some of the effort expended on bullet trajectories and splatter trails were diverted, games could be a lot more rewarding to play. Apart from the excellent *Black & White*, you would be hard pushed to find any game that has even tried to incorporate real-world logic into its design. Yet another reason why Peter Molyneux should be stuffed and placed in a cabinet now, so that future generations can admire him in his prime before he goes all Paul McCartney on us.



The cardboard box: all you need to sneak around top-secret military establishments.

So, in the interests of helping you out, here are my top five components for a logical war game. Put these in and you will have demonstrated more genuine intelligence than all the silicon Nazis in existence put together. Hey, it's a start...


Which is more intelligent: *Quake III* or a toaster?

1. When designing a fortified compound, you should try to install a working communications system. That way, if someone starts blowing up your buildings at five-second intervals you can call for help.

2. When under heavy fire, the best thing you can do is retreat and set up a defensive position. Do not ponce around in the open, looking from side to side and leaping around like a madman as bullets delicately part your buttocks.

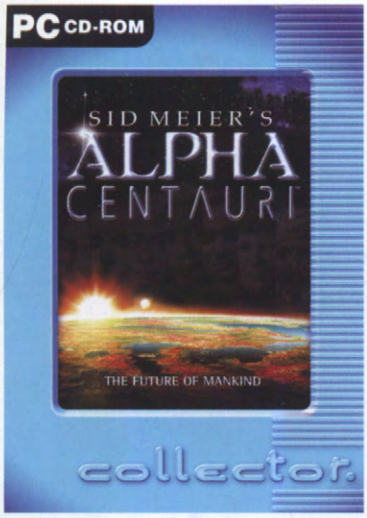
3. When you detect the enemy, it is not a smart idea to relentlessly pursue the first one you see while other units are mowing you down with AK-47s from nearby shrubbery.

4. When you corner an opponent, either wait outside (Butch Cassidy-style) or flush him out with grenades. Do not file into the room one by one while he hides behind the door siphoning your blood.

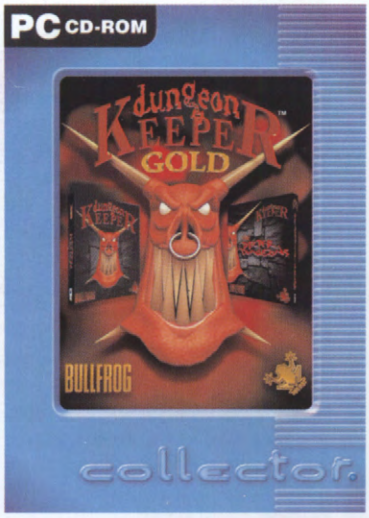
5. If you happen to discover the bodies of 23 fellow soldiers lying in a heap, do not look around cautiously for five seconds before continuing on your patrol. Oops, my mistake... 24 bodies in a heap.

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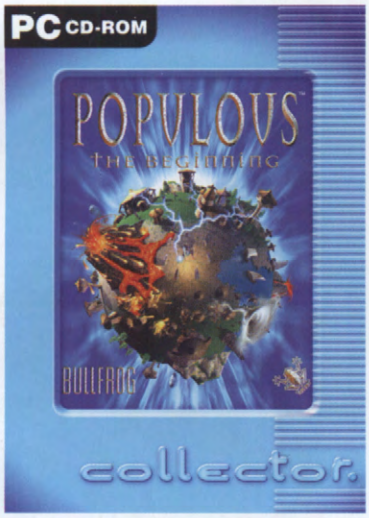
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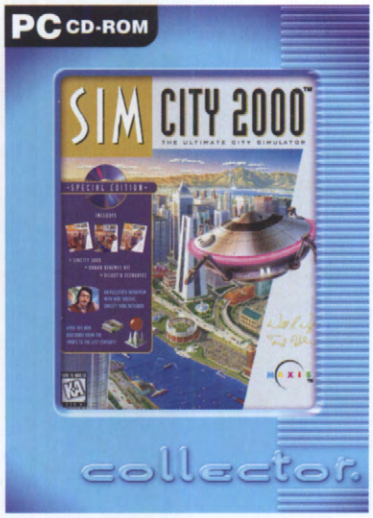
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